

# **‘Prophets of Doom’: the phenomenon of healing and power dynamics in Neo-Pentecostal African Churches**

by

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## **Declaration**

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## **Abstract**

In Southern Africa, there has been a rise of prophets who have resorted to dangerous healing practices such as the snake eating, petrol drinking and the popular ‘Doom spraying’ endangering the lives of congregants who are desperate for a special miraculous touch. Africa has been bombarded by poverty, several epidemics and illiteracy, leaving many lives in despondency and powerlessness. This has led to the abuse of many gullible lives by powerful prophetic figures who have commercialized the gospel for power and profit. This study is motivated by the need to analyze the phenomenon of healing and power dynamics that have dominated the Neo-Pentecostal African churches in Southern Africa, with a special focus on South African upcoming prophetic figures. The study analyses factors that have led to the acceptance and perpetuation of dangerous healing practices by certain Neo-Pentecostal religious leaders on their followers. This study is undertaken from a community development and theological perspective; intersecting gender, health and theology.

The study investigates the conceptual understanding of healing and power within the Neo-Pentecostal African churches by examining the historical formation of this strand of Pentecostalism and how the movement got established in South Africa. A multidisciplinary approach that encompasses the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual aspect of healing will assist in bringing forth a holistic approach to healing. The healing and power phenomenon within such religious settings poses a threat to many who congregate within such churches, especially women and young children who are mostly, the majority in attendance. This places the healing and power phenomenon at play within the Developmental and Gender discourses, intersecting with other factors that lead to the perpetuation of poverty and health challenges. The spraying of ‘Doom’ insecticide on congregants as a healing practice by a Limpopian prophet raises concerns leading to an investigation of the implications and social economic challenges at play within such settings.

Historically, the Classical Pentecostal healing tradition has been founded upon the general understanding of the Christian practice of laying on of hands when praying for the sick. Although there have been instances where symbolic and alternative healing methods became popular in the movement, the general practice of laying on of hands on the sick has been a standard tradition within the Pentecostal liturgy. Thus, making a theological contrast between the Classical

Pentecostal views on healing and the Neo-Pentecostal understanding of healing and power has brought forth disparities as to how healing is conducted and gets accentuated religiously within African communities. Also, the gendered intersection with regard to power, sees women and children being mostly vulnerable to such healing practices making this study a gendered issue. This intersection suggests that the Neo-Pentecostal African churches healing practices are dangerous due to various socio-economic challenges leading to the perpetuation of poverty. This study recommends and seeks to acknowledge the urgent need for a discerning community. Findings within community development have noted that an impoverished society bears characteristics of vulnerability, disempowerment and high levels of gullibility. This study highlights the pressing need for religious communities, governments and organizations to stand guard against abusive healing and power tendencies.

## Opsomming

In Suider-Afrika is daar 'n opkoms van profete wat begin gebruik maak het gevaarlike genesingspraktyke, soos die eet van 'n slang, die drink van petrol en die gewilde 'doom spuit' wat die lewens van gemeentes wat desperaat is vir 'n spesiale wonderwerk, in gevaar stel. Afrika word bombardeer deur armoede, verskeie epidemies en ongeletterdheid, wat baie lewens in wanhoop en magteloosheid laat. Dit het gelei tot die misbruik van baie liggelowige lewens deur kragtige profetiese figure wat die evangelie vir mag en wins gekommersialiseer het. Die motivering van hierdie studie is die behoefte om die verskynsel van genesing en kragdinamika wat die Neo-Pinksterkerke in Suider-Afrika oorheers het, te analiseer, met spesiale fokus op Suid-Afrikaanse opkomende profetiese figure. Die studie beoog dus om faktore te analiseer wat gelei het tot die aanvaarding en voortbestaan van gevaarlike genesingspraktyke deur sekere neo-pinkster godsdienstige leiers op hul volgelinge.

Hierdie studie ondersoek ook die konseptuele begrip van genesing en mag binne die Neo-Pinksterkerke, met 'n kyk na die historiese vorming van hierdie strand van Pinksterisme en hoe die beweging in Suid-Afrika gevestig is. 'N multidissiplinêre benadering wat die fisiese, emosionele, psigologiese en geestelike aspek van genesing insluit, sal help om 'n holistiese benadering tot genesing te bring. Die genesende en kragverskynsel binne sulke godsdienstige instellings vorm 'n bedreiging vir baie lewens wat in sulke kerke vergader, veral vroue en jong kinders wat hoogstens die meerderheid bywoon. Dit staar die genesings- en kragverskynsel binne die Ontwikkelings- en Geslagsdiskoers in die gesig, met dit kruis dit met ander faktore wat lei tot die voortbestaan van armoede en gesondheidsuitdagings. In hierdie studie het die Limpopiese profeet wat doom-insekdoder op gemeentes as 'n genesingspraktyk gespuit het, klem op die ondersoek geplaas om te kyk na die implikasies en sosiale ekonomiese uitdagings wat op die spel is.

Histories is die Klassieke Pinkster-genesingstradisie gegrond op die algemene begrip van die Christelike praktyk om hande op te lê wanneer hulle vir die siekes bid. Alhoewel daar gevalle was waarby simboliese en alternatiewe genesingsmetodes gebruik was, is die algemene praktyk om hande op die siekes te lê, 'n standaard tradisie binne die Pinkster-liturgie. Dus, om 'n teologiese kontras tussen die klassieke Pinkster-sienings oor genesing en die Neo-Pinkster-begrip van genesing en krag te maak, het ongelykhede ontstaan oor hoe genesing gedoen word en word

godsdienstig in Afrika-gemeenskappe beklemtoon. Ook, die geslags-kruising met betrekking tot mag, is vroue en kinders meestal kwesbaar vir sulke genesingspraktyke wat hierdie studie 'n gender-kwessie maak. Dus, dui dit daarop dat die Neo-Pinkster-genesingspraktyke gevaarlik is as gevolg van verskeie sosio-ekonomiese uitdagings wat lei tot die voortbestaan van armoede. Hierdie studie beveel dus aan en poog om klem op die behoefte te plaas aan 'n kritiese gemeenskap. Bevindinge binne gemeenskapsontwikkeling het opgemerk dat 'n arm gemeenskap 'n eienskap van kwesbaarheid, ontwapening en hoë vlakke van liggame het. Daarom poog hierdie studie om die dringende behoefte aan godsdienstige gemeenskappe, regerings en organisasies te wys; en om klem te plaas op die feit dat daar waaksaam gewees moet word teen beledigende genesing en kragtendense.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate to this thesis to the wonderful memory of my dad, Matthias Pondani who always encouraged me to become someone great. To the memory of Alastas Morrison (Kachingwa) who loved our family dearly.

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## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
AIC	African Independent Churches
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AOG	Assemblies of God
APCs	African Pentecostal Churches
CCACZ	Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion
CDE	Center for Development and Enterprise
CPC	Classical Pentecostal Churches
CRL	Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities
ESVB	English Standard Version Bible
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Viruses
IPCs	Independent Pentecostal Churches
IPTCs	Indigenous Pentecostal-type Churches
KJV	King James Version
MZGA	Mount Zion General Assembly
NGO	Non-Profit Organization
NPACs	Neo-Pentecostal African Churches
NPCs	Neo-Pentecostal Churches
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament

PMCs	Pentecostal Mission Churches
SA	South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcasting Cooperation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
WHO	World Health Organization
ZCC	Zion Christian Church

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*Figure 1*

The Map of South Africa showing all provinces, cities and key towns

Accessed 2018 [Online] Available:

[https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/za\\_provinces\\_map2.htm](https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/za_provinces_map2.htm) [2018, 24 October].





## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

In Southern Africa, dangerous healing practices have raised concerns with regards to the health, safety and protection of congregants (mostly women and children) who are exposed to such activities. This has led to the South African government, through the help of the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission) to take up the role of finding measures to safeguard congregants against such tendencies. The engagement of the government with the religious sphere has, however, raised concerns amongst many religious leaders as to whether the church has failed to deal with its own issues. This study focuses on analyzing the healing phenomenon and the power dynamics within Neo-Pentecostal African churches; especially those in South Africa, with a special attention to the so called ‘prophet’ who sprayed ‘Doom’ on congregants as a healing technique<sup>1</sup>. This study, therefore, examines the healing traditions founded within the whole Pentecostal movement, adopting a holistic healing approach, one that understands healing not primarily as the absence of sickness, but encompassing other elements that bring forth wholeness. The aim of this study, therefore, is to examine the factors that lead to the perpetuation of dangerous healing practices by certain Neo-Pentecostal religious leaders on their followers. The complexity and the implications of adopting dangerous healing practices on the psychological, socio and economic aspects within a religious setting makes this study a developmental issue, intersecting with theology and health. Thus, the need to analyze the socio-economic, power and gender implications posed by these happenings and the relationship between healing and power within the church context becomes vital.

Nowadays, prosperity preaching has been very attractive to those living in impoverished communities. Prophecy and/or prophetic gifts have also become instruments of profit in these settings. The Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) (2008a:24) report noted that there is a great concern with regard to some of the entrepreneurial pastors who are enriching themselves

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<sup>1</sup> SABC Digital News. 2017. I am not ashamed of the gospel I Preach – ‘*Prophet of Doom*’ [Online] Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWWz7hhstX0&t=76s>. [2017, 05 May].

at the expense of devout but naive followers, many of whom have intense spiritual needs. The interrelatedness of health and wealth in conjunction with power and fame has become problematic within the newly established Neo-Pentecostal African churches (NPAC). Here, Cox (2001:16) finds that some of the visible representatives of the prosperity gospel have become ostentatiously rich. As it were, those who are required to give are usually the poor-majority while those on the receiving end, are usually the rich young ministers who are generally regarded as the pious ones.

## 1.2 Research Focus

With the climate change rate over the past 50-100years, the continent continues to suffer from socio-economic challenges, with clear effects on health, livelihoods and food security<sup>2</sup>. The United Nations Department for General Assembly and Conference Management has noted that 54 countries belong to the African Group<sup>3</sup>. Amidst other significant regions of the continent, the Southern region of Africa has made socio-economic headlines over the past decade with the land expropriation issues.

The African continent has also been known for diverse cultural norms and spirituality. Religious demographics show that Christianity is the most popular religion having 86.8% of the population and being the religion of 79.9% of black people<sup>4</sup>. Amongst the black majority of the population, there is a rise of unemployment rate amongst the youth who are now resorting to other forms of entrepreneurship. Some communities, especially townships are yet to recover from the effects of apartheid and underdevelopment. Thus, religion has played a significant role in the many communities in Africa. As a result of the poor living conditions and unaffordable medical requirements, many poor black families are left to spiritual means of attaining healing and protection from evil spirits. Traditionally, the church has been understood as a sacred environment in these contexts. The introduction of dangerous healing practice within the Neo-Pentecostal branch of Christianity has, however, incited government bodies such as the CRL Rights Commission to raise concerns with the perpetuation of such practices that endanger people's lives.

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations. 2018. Africa. [Online]. Available: <http://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/africa/> [2018, 24 October].

<sup>3</sup> Dag Library, United Nations. 2018. How many African countries are members of the United Nations? [Online] Available: <http://ask.un.org/faq/22882>. [2018, 24 October].

<sup>4</sup> Media Club South Africa. 2018. SA Fast Facts [Online]. <http://www.mediaclubsouthafrica.com/landstatic/82-fast-facts> [2018, 03 January].

Historically, many African states have evolved from a strong patriarchal background, slavery and ancestral worship. The impact of poverty, thus, bears multiple socio-economic challenges across the continent. Such and other factors have contributed to the perpetuation of dangerous healing practices resulting in the abuse and manipulation of people's faith, resources and health. Religiously, new churches have mushroomed, and many young people have taken up the role of spiritual leadership as prophets. In this environment, the so called 'prophets' and many other prophetic figures within the borders of South Africa have risen to fame and popularity despite the criticism attached to their wealth, power and practices. This study will focus on analyzing the phenomenon of healing and power dynamics in Neo-Pentecostal African churches, drawing examples from South African prophetic figures who have been associated with such practices.

### **1.3 Motivation**

There are three motivations for this study: firstly, my Pentecostal background and experience within the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM); secondly, the social concerns that have been expressed on various social platforms concerning dangerous healing practices and the wealthy lifestyle that follows the perpetrators of such practices; and lastly, the desire to make a practical theological contribution to academic findings with regard to the intersection of healing, health and gender.

Smith (2008:2) notes that the uniqueness of experiences sets Pentecostals apart, thus the movement has drawn massive crowds and has influenced many Christian gatherings who may not be keen to fall under the Pentecostal bracket. My personal experience and ministerial involvement with what could be termed a "classical" Pentecostal church has enabled me to experience first-hand the Pentecostal distinctives of ministry which included conducting evangelistic crusades and healing ministries in various countries within the Southern Region of Africa. Healing is one of the primary aspects of God's mission on earth, encompassing all other elements that contribute to the salvation of God's creation. The healing culture of laying hands on the sick when praying for them has been a common tradition within the Pentecostal movement. However, my Pentecostal background and ministerial experience, is not an attempt to validate dangerous healing practices. The challenge of having to witness dangerous healing practices within newly established Neo-Pentecostal African churches has stirred a desire to undertake an investigation as to what factors precipitate such practices within this particular religious' community today.

Socially, women and children constitute a larger share of Pentecostal attendances; and sadly, there have been many reports of sexual molestation and rape in recent months. Financial abuse and scandals have also been reported, raising concerns with regard to the prophetic personage who are seemingly, thriving on the socio-economic challenges in Africa.

The social media, the world over, has become a hub of information and an ideal platform for religious adverts. Bezuidenhout & Davis (2014:64) acknowledges that social media<sup>5</sup> provides us with interesting topics for research. In this regard, the concept of a ‘prophet of Doom’ would be an interesting point of departure for this research<sup>6</sup>. References will, however, be made to other dangerous practices that are occurring in various Neo-Pentecostal African settings within the Southern African Developmental Countries (SADC). As it were, a controversial impression has been created from the pulpit and sold to the public through social media. I acknowledge that the church’s current obligation is to discern the diverse prophetic gestures used for ministry - especially when conducting healing and deliverance within Neo-Pentecostal liturgy. Spraying of the ‘Doom’ insecticide, drinking automobile fuel such as petrol, and eating deadly creatures like snakes and rats; poses a threat to the immediate livelihoods and distorts the faith of the audiences and/or spectators of such kind of healing techniques.

Davis (2014:12) points out that research should always have a purpose and it should make contribution to a larger body of knowledge. While an attempt to exhaust the Neo-Pentecostal phenomenon on healing and power is far beyond the scope of this study, it is hoped that the study will ignite an academic conversation and engagement, within a broader understanding of healing and power from a Classical Pentecostal point of view. Here, Martin (2011:08) finds that a discerning community helps the disadvantaged in guarding against abusive tendencies; hence, there is a pressing need for a discerning community.

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<sup>5</sup> Boyd and Ellison (2007:211; Qualman 2001:64; Scot 2011: xiii), social media platforms are technological mediums and networking sites that serve as information and web-based services which allows individuals and cooperates to construct public and private identify, spirituality and informs moral choices.

<sup>6</sup> SABC Digital News. 2017. I am not ashamed of the gospel I Preach – ‘*Prophet of Doom*’ [Online] Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWWz7hhstX0&t=76s>. [2017, 05 May]. Scientifically, doom has been condemned as a precaution for any human inhalation; but, ideal for making use when fumigating household insects. Rabalago has been dubbed the ‘*prophet of Doom*’ due to the practice of spraying ‘Doom’ insecticide on congregants, that happened in South Africa, Limpopo.

Seeing that not much has been done with regard to gender, health and development, this study will fill a gap in the dearth of research in this field while addressing the pressing need for a discerning community.

## 1.4 Literature Review

The CRL Rights Commission, together with other religious leaders, commenced a dialogue with regard to the appropriate ways of conducting healing, praying or undertaking any spiritual exercise in the name of the church. The CRL Rights Commission has been established to protect the rights of communities, so that people may enjoy and practice their culture or religion. The CRL Rights Commission is also mandated with “ensuring equality of cultural, religious and linguistic rights between and among diverse communities, as well as resolving conflict between and among communities and organs of state or private institutions<sup>7</sup>.” Several cases that raised controversy amongst concerned citizens, have been brought to the Commission. Amongst other popular cases, the spraying of ‘Doom’ insecticide to congregants has been debated over as to whether the practice endangers their lives. Here, South Africa’s court system took a stance against the spraying of ‘Doom’ insecticide on congregants<sup>8</sup>. The intervention of government and other organizations to draft a regulation for churches has become a topic of interest. The scope of this study is limited to analyzing the phenomenon of healing and power within a Neo-Pentecostal African context.

The concept of healing is not limited to religious settings. Medical fraternities, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) among others, have understood the concept of healing differently. Generally, religious opinions relegate healing to a spiritual phenomenon. A holistic approach to healing and wholeness has, however, been adopted as encompassing the psychological, physical, relational and spiritual aspects of life<sup>9</sup>. This understanding does not limit healing to the absence of sickness but broadens the scope of healing in the world today. “A multi-disciplinary approach is essential because of the nature of both healing and religion” (Bate 2001:02)<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> CLR Rights Commission Complaints Handling Procedure Manual 2017 [Online] Available: <http://www.crlcommission.org.za/docs/complaints-manual.pdf> [24 October 2017].

<sup>8</sup> SABC Digital News. 2017. Court barred doom prophet from using insect killer on churchgoers. [Online] Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRE93P2ukek&t=24s> [2017, 24 October]

<sup>9</sup> WHO. 2017. Frequently Asked Questions [Online]. <http://www.who.int/suggestions/faq/en/> [2017, 24 October].

<sup>10</sup> These two are central to human experience; thus, Health and illness becomes inevitable experience of all human beings (Bate: 2001:02).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity<sup>11</sup>. In the healing discussion, (Bate 2001:17) states that medical studies have tended to interpret other forms of healing through the medical model which relies on scientific method of variable repeatable conclusions. Dow (1986:58) finds that the psychological understanding of religious healing suggest that the central feature of the process is emotion transaction. Similarly, anthropological studies of the Christian healing ministry in South Africa and religious healing in general, usually concentrate on the role of culture (Bate 2001:11). It is essential to, therefore, take into consideration that healing addresses the wellbeing of the total person as this enables adequate assessment of various factors at play within such settings.

Neo-Pentecostals, within an African context, can be identified as the newer Pentecostal Churches that are founded by African indigenous church planters who, at most, do not hold any form of training, accreditation or western influence<sup>12</sup>. However, there is an enormous variety in African Pentecostalism, so much so that it often seems impossible to generalize them in one bracket (Giford 2010:251). According to Lindhardt (2015:194); Neo-Pentecostal churches appeared in Africa in the 1970s and have been increasing in size and number at a remarkable rate ever since.

Kangwa (2016:04), argues for the African continent as characterized by challenges of poverty, disease, civil war, unemployment, the need to find marriage partners, barrenness and the lack of responsive government, thus, many people rush to African Initiated churches and Neo- Pentecostal African churches looking for a remedy. The relationship between health and wealth, power and prophecy or poverty and profit has raised interest both in the academic world and the religious circles. Owing to the socio-economic challenges, patriarchy and gender inequality, many women and children have fallen victims to rogue prophetic figures who are thriving on the ignorance, desperation and gullibility of the poor. Impoverished societies bear characteristics of disempowerment and vulnerability so that people living in such conditions are mostly gullible to anything that presents itself as success. Seeing that many African societies have been patriarchal and, thus, undermining the role of women in development, the Neo-Pentecostals have taken up

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<sup>11</sup> Preamble to the Constitution of (WHO) as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19 June - 22 July 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the delegates of 61 States (no. 2, p. 100) and enforced on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 1948.

<sup>12</sup> Biblical Christianity. [2017]. Reformed Family Conference 2016 by Conrad Mbewe on Neo Pentecostalism Part One. [Online] Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXmwYiaUEA4&t=2665s> [2017, 10 May]

power dynamics that perpetuate the oppression of the powerless. These factors, namely socio-economic challenges, the notion of ‘spiritual fathers and sons’ and experiential theology; intersect with gender, development and health as a theological discourse.

## 1.5 Research Question

Bak (2004:21), stipulates that research questions may be of an empirical kind; in that they seek to obtain information and data that is descriptive in nature, whilst other research questions may be of analytical kind; that is, they steer an individual towards a phenomenon. The aim of this study is to analyze the phenomenon of healing and power dynamics in Neo-Pentecostal African Churches, with a special focus on the prophet who is dubbed the ‘prophet of Doom’, in order to identify what precipitates these practices within the church’ The study will be seeking to answer the following research question:

*What factors lead to the acceptance and perpetuation of dangerous healing practices by certain Neo-Pentecostal religious leaders on their followers?*

## 1.6 Aims and Objectives

Davis (2014:17) contends that every research project should always be directed and driven by specific objectives based on certain philosophical orientations that co-determine the selection of theoretical and methodological orientations.

In the attempt to answer the research question and achieve the aim of this study, the focus of this research paper is guided by specific objectives:

1. To discuss the understanding of healing and power dynamics within Neo-Pentecostal African churches (*Interpretive*)
2. To describe the state of Neo-Pentecostalism in Africa, dangerous healing practices and the “prophet of Doom” (*Descriptive and Empirical task*)
3. To explore healing and Power dynamics from a Classical Pentecostal perspective (*Normative task*)
4. To analyze the intersection of healing, gender and power in Neo-Pentecostal African churches (*Interpretive task*)

5. To make recommendations as to how the theological understanding of healing and power ought to be regarded (*Pragmatic task*)

## **1.7 Research Design and Methodology**

### **1.7.1 Research Design**

Bak (2004:25) notes that the function of the research design section of the thesis in the introductory chapter is to give readers a clear indication of the means by which a scholar attempts to achieve research aims: to outline an appropriate procedure (which, if necessary, could be replaced by others), and to indicate the sources of data that will be used.

Mouton (2001:55) defines a “research design as a plan or a blue print of how you plan to conduct the research.” The research design for this study is qualitative.

A research methodology requires the use of necessary tools and procedure to examine a research topic (Mouton 2001:57). Thus, this research will be qualitative in nature, to analyze the case of the ‘Prophet of Doom’ in order to understand the phenomenon of healing and power dynamics in the Neo-Pentecostal African churches (hereafter to be referred to as NPACs) that have been trending on social media platforms like Facebook and Youtube handles. Thus, I will be analyzing relevant content posted on social media platforms. Basically, a qualitative study is a collection of data that is primarily conceptual or verbal (De Vos et al 1998:15). Mouton (2001:175) and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014:70) regard a conceptual analysis as a concept that brings theoretical clarity. Therefore, this study investigates the conceptual understanding of healing and power within the Pentecostal framework and how it is appropriated. Furthermore, the engagement of different literatures from academic sources, social media conversations to internet posts, will facilitate a comprehensive analysis. As such, this will be a non-empirical study<sup>13</sup>.

### **1.7.2 Research Methodology**

Research methodology can be empirical study or/and theoretical (literature) study. Empirical study involves engaging research participants in field work in order to generate primary data from the participants. Theoretical study involves engaging literature in order to generate secondary data or

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<sup>13</sup> Two methods can be used in undertaking a research; empirical (conducting interviews, survey’s, listing a questionnaire and experiments, etc.) and non-empirical (theoretical; engaging academic books, online publications, articles or journals) However, both methods are valid for conducting research.



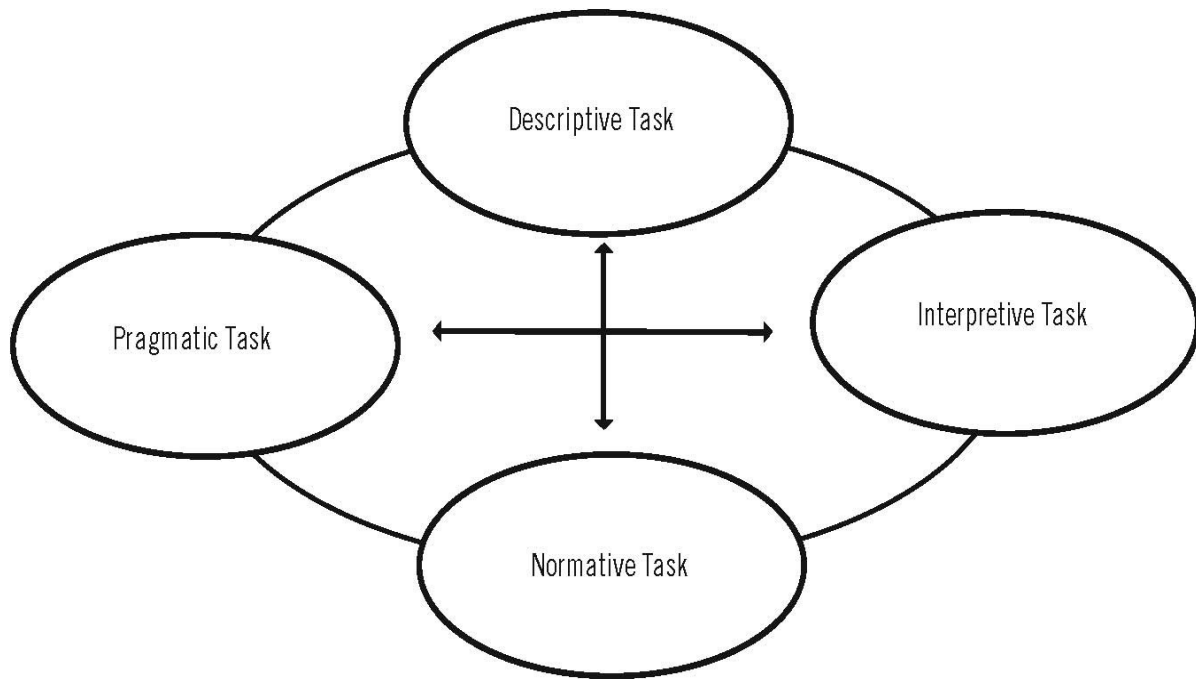
primary data of secondary data. Secondary data entails analyzing data of argument in literature, while primary data of secondary data entails engaging the primary data of empirical study as documented in literature. I have chosen theoretical study so that I can be able to have a general view of the research. I engaged theoretical (literature) study to conduct this research. To gather theoretical data for this investigation, I will also analyze information provided by social networks such as YouTube and news blog posts. And for further academic arguments and references, I will engage accredited academic sources such as books, articles and class notes.

With regard to the research design method, I chose deductive approach because this study analyses the overview of Pentecostal healing tradition and narrows the research to Neo-Pentecostal African method of conducting research.

In terms of practical theological methodology, I will engage Richard Osmer's four theological task (2005: xv; 2008:4, Kapic 2012:319)<sup>14</sup>. Osmer (2005: xv, 2008:04), in responding to the questions; why, what and how? in theological interpretation, when giving the descriptive structure of carrying out a non-empirical study. When analyzing concepts, a comprehensive study needs to be done so that concepts may not be misrepresented or poorly constructed (Mouton 2001:177). To rectify that weakness, Huysamen (1994:190) suggests that one should focus on the methodology chosen, especially when analyzing literature that is published. Thus, I find this practical theological model ideal and adequate for guiding this research for completion within the allocated time of this research. It should be noted that the possibility of conducting oral interviews and church service participation; is not possible due to the limited time frame for conducting this research.

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<sup>14</sup> Richard Osmer's Practical theological model engages social context by asking questions, 'how' 'why' and 'what' the community can employ praxis to a particular context.



Osmer's (2008) model to practical theological researches.

- Descriptive task (*What is going on?*)
- Interpretive Task (*Why is it going on?*)
- Normative Task (*What ought to be going on?*)
- Pragmatic Task (*What ought to be the response and how can we respond?*)

## 1.8 Limitation of Study

According to Enslin (2014:275), a research study is intended to resolve a research problem within a specific domain or scope. Simply put, the scope of any study should refer to what is and what is not relevant to your study. Therefore, there is a need to clarify what this research entails.

Since Pentecostalism is a global strand within Christianity, a limitation of research focus helps in bringing out the context and specifications. This paper has based its relevance on the prophetic figures who belong to the fast-growing NPACs within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), analyzing the healing phenomenon and the power dynamics within such indigenous churches. With fear of generalizing the NPCs and categorizing the prophets in one bracket, the focus of this thesis is particularly on analyzing harmful healing practices. Here, the male prophet who sprayed Doom insecticide on a female congregant as a healing technique is

specifically used as a departure point. Furthermore, an attempt to investigate factors that lead to the perpetuation of these dangerous practices is discussed.

The secondary limitation is the data analyses given that the study depends on what has been discussed on the media, documents and government documents. This limits the interpretive scope of the study and the study seeks to maintain caution by maintaining data analyses of the documents provided in the public domain (Strydom 1998:34). Also, some key information might be omitted due to the vastness of the experiences within Pentecostalism (Silva 2012:141).

## **1.9 Theological Significance**

Osmer (2012:320) states that practical theology equips member with adequate knowledge when dealing with societal problems in relation to the mission of the church. Therefore, as a practical theologian within the community developmental field, this study will contribute to the debate on the adoption of dangerous practices by certain churches and its effects on the psycho-social and economic wellbeing of members of these churches. Besides identifying the factors leading to the perpetuation of such practices; this study seeks to contribute to the awareness against heretic practices, abusive tendencies towards the powerless, and manipulation of the office and function of the prophet.

Although the CRL Rights Commission took the initiative to interrogate the dangerous practices, it is hoped that this study will set off a critical theological dialogue that will enable future research with material for engaging the ongoing phenomenon. Martin (2011:02) argues that a prophet ought to encourage the community to foresee the future towards reconciliation, justice and right standing with God who is the central factor. However, the model posed through the prophetic models nowadays, has no regard for justice or human dignity. Thus, this healing phenomenon and the power dynamic becomes a developmental issue that intersects with other factors that perpetuate poverty.

## **1.10 Conceptualization of Key Terms**

To avoid generalization, this study has made use of specific terms that may suggest a different meaning to the reader, thus, clarifying key concepts and terminologies used becomes necessary.

### **1.10.1 ‘Prophet of Doom’**

The key concept of this thesis has been premised upon the practice of spraying ‘Doom’ insecticide on congregants that trended on social media resulting in prophet Lethabo Rabalago being dubbed the ‘Prophet of Doom’<sup>15</sup>. Such practices have been propounded by many other prophetic figures who seemingly fall into the same category.

### **1.10.2 Prophet**

Although there are biblical functions, perceptions and themes associated with the office of the prophet; the use of the title ‘prophets’ (unless otherwise stated) in the context of this thesis, refers to indigenous, influential and powerful religious leaders who have founded indigenous (Neo-Pentecostal) African ministries.

### **1.10.3 Dangerous Healing practice**

‘Dangerous healing practice’ is phrase that has been frequently used in this thesis referring to healing practices that may be harmful or endangering lives, especially when conducting healing with the use of poisonous or hazardous substances. These types of healing practices are regarded as having been scientifically condemned as a precaution for any human inhalation, but ideal for use when fumigating household insects.

### **1.10.4 Healing as Holistic**

The term can be used interchangeably with health. According to WHO, defines health as “the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity<sup>16</sup>.” A holistic approach to a phenomenon integrates the physical, spiritual, mental, and social aspects that relate to the whole being of any person (August 2010:45; Myers 2011:10).

### **1.10.5 Gender**

Generally, gender has been used synonymously when referring to issues related to men or women or both. Momsen (2010:9) refers to gender as a socially constructed role of men or women with regard to their differences. Moser (1993:3) finds that the term ‘gender’ encompasses roles played

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<sup>15</sup> SABC Digital News. 2017. I am not ashamed of the gospel I preach - "Prophet of Doom" [Online]. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWWz7hhstX0> [Accessed: 2017, 25 October].

<sup>16</sup> World Health Organization. 2017. Frequency asked Questions. [Online]. Available: <http://www.who.int/suggestions/faq/en/>. [Accessed: 25 Oct 2017].

by both women and men within any society. The term gender is used to refer to issues relating to women especially with regard to how women are treated by men in African society.

#### **1.10.6 Power dynamics**

The patriarchal foundations of many African societies favored men and excluded women from power. Within the context of religion, there seems to be a pattern that resembles patriarchal dominance over women and the powerless. In this thesis, the use of power as authority, and power over or with, will be analyzed in relation to the leadership roles and function displayed by prophets.

#### **1.10.7 Neo-Pentecostal African Churches**

Generally, ‘Neo-Pentecostal churches’ refers to those churches which have their origins in the Charismatic Movement (Anderson 1992:3)<sup>17</sup>. Also, Neo-Pentecostalism refers to the third wave of Pentecostalism. As a global movement, Neo-Pentecostalism describes a wide range of groupings with different liturgy, experiences and contexts. It is a non-denominational branch of Christianity (Anderson 2006:157). It is quite a challenge to try and define the whole Neo-Pentecostal grouping, thus, the use of Neo-Pentecostal African churches in this thesis, refers to African churches founded by indigenous individuals who are not affiliated to any western or classical church. These churches are distinct from the Zionist, Ethiopian churches or ‘white garment churches’ which are most commonly referred to as African Independent Churches - these are those newly established Pentecostal churches usually led by a ‘prophet’ or ‘apostle’. Instead of having an affiliation to a larger or older Pentecostal organization (Classical Pentecostals), these churches are submitted to another prophet who may be addressed as a ‘spiritual father.’

#### **1.10.8 Spiritual father**

According to Kalu (2008:124), the spiritual fatherhood phenomenon refers to a situation where leaders encourage members to refer to their spiritual leaders as “fathers in the Lord,” conveying warming images of intimacy drawn from a family setting but used to encrust patriarchal and gerontocratic authority patterns. This term has become very popular amongst newly established churches. In this thesis, ‘spiritual father’ is used to refer to an individual who provides oversight (or spiritual covering in contemporary language) over a ministry or individuals. Various themes

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<sup>17</sup> This includes the so-called ‘non-denominational’ churches

around the function, necessity or meaning over such a concept, have been debated and sometimes contested with regard to the understanding of such a portfolio.

### **1.10.9 Classical Pentecostal Churches**

According to Anderson (1992:3), the ‘Classical’ nomenclature is accredited to a significant wave or revival that shook the world emanating from the Azusa street meetings led by Seymour. Classical Pentecostalism refers to the first wave of Pentecostalism and churches founded within such a dispensation. In other instances, the term can be used to refer to the traditional or older Pentecostal churches, who have denominationalized the older Pentecostal movement. In this thesis, Classical Pentecostal churches refers to older Pentecostal churches.

## **1.11 Chapter Outline**

**Chapter 1- INTRODUCTION:** An introductory chapter that outlines the scope of the entire research. It presents the research topic, question and problem statement that motivated the commencement of this study. Furthermore, this section gives a summary of the literature review, aims and objectives, research methodology and study limitations as well as a concise overview of the entire thesis.

**Chapter 2 – CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF HEALING WITHIN THE NPCs:** This chapter provides a brief historical account of the Pentecostal movement globally, followed by a focus on the African continent and Neo-Pentecostal churches in South Africa. The chapter also engages the conceptual understanding of healing within NPCs. A holistic approach to healing is proposed that will facilitate a broader understanding to the discussion.

**Chapter 3 – THE CONTROVERSIAL HEALING PRACTISE AND THE ‘PROPHET OF DOOM’:** Attempting to answer the question, “What is going on?” this chapter describes the controversial healing practices with a focus on the prophet who sprayed doom on congregants as a healing technique. Several examples that bear similarity to the ‘Prophet of Doom’ will be alluded to in this chapter, as well as the implications associated with dangerous healing practice, in the attempt to discover factors that leading to the acceptance and perpetuation of the dangerous healing practices.

**Chapter 4 – HEALING AND POWER FROM A CLASSICAL PENTECOSTAL VIEW:** In the attempt to answer the question; “What is should be going on?” this Chapter commences by

looking at Pentecostals in history, ranging from the Classical formation of Pentecostalism to the beliefs that have remained in the movement to date such as the laying of hands on the sick when praying for them. The use of scripture in relation to healing will also be briefly examined – from a Pentecostal point of view. Here, alternative perspectives on healing will be briefly looked at, examining the use of oil and other unique biblical instances whereby symbolic gestures were used to communicate healing to the sick persons. Furthermore, the relationship between power and prosperity will be explored from a Classical Pentecostal view.

**Chapter 5 – EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF HEALING, POWER AND GENDER IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCOURSE:** Owing to the psycho - socio-economic challenges posed by the Neo-Pentecostal healing practices; this chapter, analyses the intersection of gender, healing and power where all factors that pose a challenge to the understanding of healing within NPCs are examined.

**Chapter 6 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:** This will be the last chapter of this research. Summarizing the findings from the study and providing recommendations arising from these findings. Suggestions for further studies within the same discourse are also made.

## **1.12 Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced the scope of the study that seeks to understand the phenomenon of healing and power dynamics in Neo-Pentecostal African Churches. The general outline of this introductory chapter brings the dangerous healing practices at an intersection with gender, health power, allowing the reader to explore various avenues of thought with regard to the perpetuation of such practices. the intersection of the socio-economic challenges, the gendered conceptions of power, the dangerous healing practices is explored with the aim of finding the impetus as to why these practices set a dangerous trend to the Pentecostal faith.

In view of this pre-formation of the discussion, the next chapter details a conceptual understanding of healing within the Neo-Pentecostal African church settings.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF HEALING WITHIN THE NEO-PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The first Chapter has provided the backdrop of this study in stating the research focus, the research question as well as the aim and objective of this study. This chapter will commence by providing the historical genesis of what could be termed as one of the largest contemporary branches of modern Christianity. Attention will be given to references of the term ‘Pentecostal’, the significance of the Spirit’s baptism, the three ‘waves’ of Pentecostalism, and the establishment of Pentecostalism in Africa. The significant events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are brought into discussion with special reference to the Azusa street revival and the doctrinal impact of Holiness movements. Within the African continent, Africa houses vast religious genres, cultures and beliefs. As such, the establishment of Classical Pentecostal denominations has, to some extent, influenced the introduction of African Neo-Pentecostals amongst other Pentecostal groupings. Today, the Southern Africa region, including South Africa, has experienced the mushrooming of Neo-Pentecostal Churches, with some of the groupings adopting dangerous healing practices.

In view of the introduction of dangerous healing practices to Pentecostalism, this chapter will analyze the varied understandings of healing within Pentecostalism, and how a holistic approach provides a critical framework for analyzing the phenomenon of healing within NPCs in Africa. Healing is a worldwide phenomenon that has various definitions and meaning. Therefore, the last section of this chapter, will analyze the influence of Neo-Pentecostal understanding of healing as it relates to the acceptance and perpetuation of dangerous healing practices.

#### **2.2 Pentecostals in History**

The quest for a deity has been a common phenomenon amongst many cultures and peoples of the earth. Although some would deny claims of belonging to any religion, the role of religion in reconciling people from different backgrounds has led to many people joining religious groupings. Amongst the most popular religions of the world, Christianity has remained the largest religious



grouping globally, leading to various expressions of the Christian faith and the establishment of innumerable denominations all over the world<sup>18</sup>. Within Christian circles, Pentecostalism is currently recognized as one of the fastest growing Christian movements on earth (Cox 2001:15). One of the global growth factors within Pentecostalism is the many internal conflicts that usually lead to the birthing of new denominations. This has been viewed as both a blessing and a curse within Pentecostalism. Cox (2001:220) considers religious movements as a wrestling match whereby the arena continuously hosts a match between old and new lifestyles. Thus, the tensions that rise amongst Pentecostals, often lead to the birthing of new churches. Here, Horn (1989:01) notes that theology does not develop in a vacuum - it is always influenced by several other theologies, movements and historical events. Thus, the birthing of newer churches within Pentecostalism has often been accompanied by the introduction of new doctrines and practices, with some being modernized and others borrowed from previous versions of Pentecostalism.

Pentecost or the day of Pentecost (Gr. *Pentékosté*) from pénte "five" – properly fiftieth, is regarded as occurring during the Jewish Festival of weeks; rather, a one-day festival that was celebrated at the end of barley harvest in such a way that harvested first fruits were presented to God fifty days after the Passover (McKim 2014:233)<sup>19</sup>. Anderson (1992:02) states that the term 'Pentecost' is taken from the biblical day of Pentecost founded in the book of Acts (2:1-4) where believers, who were anticipating the outpouring of the promised Holy Spirit were filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke in other tongues. Although there were many occasions where the Holy Spirit's power was witnessed and experienced in the OT, generally, it is the day of Pentecost and the 'speaking in tongues' experience that has been recognized as significant within Pentecostal terminology and belief. Thus, many Pentecostals do believe that the experience of the one hundred and twenty disciples who waited for the promise of the Holy Spirit at the upper room, known as the "Holy Spirit baptism" should be a normative experience for all believers (Synan 2001:889). After the Azusa revival, some Pentecostals believed that the gift of 'tongues' was limited to foreign languages (*xenolalia*), with which the Bible was to be preached to the entire world (Anderson

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<sup>18</sup> [Online] Available: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but-they-are-declining-in-europe/> [2017, 14 October]

<sup>19</sup> (Exodus. 23:14-17). In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit came to the church 50 days after Christ's resurrection, also called the 'Whitsunday' (Acts 2:1-5).

2009:642). The general doctrine, however, curbs the Pentecostal experience as the ‘tongue talking experience’ (*glossalia*) accompanied by the miraculous.

With regard to Pentecostal identity in general, there is no standard criterion to determine who belongs to the Pentecostal grouping since there are many, who are non-Pentecostal church goers, but who embrace Pentecostal beliefs and experiences<sup>20</sup>. The limitation of this study identifies the impossible task of classifying Pentecostals within one typological standard because of their versatile characteristics (Dickow et al. 2012:19). Nowadays, there are many churches who supplement their faith with Pentecostal experiences such as healing styles; and this results in the fact that Pentecostalism is not viewed as exclusive to a single denomination or even what may be termed “classical” Pentecostal denominations. In an attempt to describe the identity of Pentecostals, there are so many expressions or reasons that make Pentecostals unique, and one of the significant distinguishing factors is their spirituality, that is, the personal and direct awareness of the Holy Spirit through the empowerment of the Spirit’s power, manifested by spiritual gifts given to believers (McKim 2014:233).

Looking further into the Pentecostal heritage, there are three significant waves that are credited as key events, namely the first wave of Classical Pentecostals, the second wave of the Charismatic renewal and the third wave associated with Neo-Pentecostals. The first wave is an early 20<sup>th</sup> century movement that saw itself as recapturing the Holy Spirit renewal experience of the Church, experienced by the 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians who were baptized with the Holy Spirit (McKim 2014:233). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, various Independent and “Holiness” groups existed in the Western world and various protestant settings (Anderson 2009:641). Burger and Nel (2008:16) note that the origins of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Pentecostal movement can be traced back to two important events and places: 1901 Charles Parham’s Bible College; and 1906 William J. Seymour’s Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles. Charles Parham is a former Methodist preacher from Topeka, Kansas, known for formulating the doctrine of the spirit baptism that is accompanied by speaking in tongues and for creating an “Apostolic Faith” movement in 1901 (Anderson 2009:642).

Amongst other major players in the Classical formation of the movement, William Seymour is popularly known for the Los Angeles 1906 visit and the “Azusa street Revival” that ignited

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<sup>20</sup> This study acknowledges that there are diverse and many experiences within the Pentecostal movement.

Pentecostalism into an international movement (Anderson 2009:642). A Pentecostal revival had broken forth amidst unpromising circumstances led by Seymour who had no theological training but was influenced by what may be termed “domestic peasants”, janitors and day workers (Cox 2001:24). Out of the 1906-1908 revivals, various Pentecostal denominations such as the the Apostolic Faith Mission, Pentecostal Holiness Church, the Church of God, the Church of God in Christ and the United Holy Church emerged, setting a stage for the global enterprise of the movement.

According to Anderson (2009:641), the second wave of Pentecostalism began between the 1950s and the 1960s era, when ministers and members within established mainline churches and denominations sought a fresh Pentecostal experience (Anderson, 2009:641). After the lapse of a few decades, Pentecostalism had spread widely in the United States of America, especially through the influence of the Azusa street revival. It soon reached Europe, where there was a ready response among those affected by recent spiritual awakenings in Wales and elsewhere as well as throughout the Global South (Ward, 1988:53). The third wave dates back to the mid-1970s, as a third phase of revival that arose in the form of Neo-Pentecostal or Independent denominational Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement, emphasizing spiritual gifts as was in the former days of the revival (Anderson 2009:642).

Ward (1988:502) notes that doctrinally, Pentecostal theology is to be rooted in various aspects of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century fundamentalism - such as holiness groups which taught and believed that after conversion, a believer ought to experience sanctification, that is, Holy Spirit Baptism and an endowment of miraculous powers. Their teachings were propounded by key revivalists such as Charles Finney, Asa Mahan (1800-89), Phoebe W. Palmer (1807-87); and others who claimed that the baptism of the Spirit was a post-conversion power that is primarily necessary for witness and service<sup>21</sup>.

In an attempt to discover the secret of the movement's growth, Cox (2001:81) states that Pentecostalism has grown and found success because, it speaks to the spiritual emptiness within humanity, by reaching beyond the echelons of creed and ceremony into the core of human religiousness, “into what might be called “primal spirituality” that largely unprocessed nucleus of

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<sup>21</sup> Teachings of A. J. Gordon (1836-95) taught and believed that divine healing was to be received by faith.

the psyche in which the unending struggle for a sense of purpose and significance goes on.” It is the experiences and testimonies that set the movement apart. Many people have mistaken Pentecostalism with fundamentalism, simply because they emerged about the same time and share certain features (Cox 2001:74)<sup>22</sup>.

### **2.3 Pentecostals in Africa**

Even though the Azusa street revival had attracted critics, many people continued to arrive at Azusa meetings for ‘the blessing’, and after receiving the anointing, some left for cities in Europe and Asia, and by 1908, the movement had spread to Egypt and South Africa (Cox 2001:101). However, Anderson and Otwang (1993:136) argue that African Pentecostalism is essentially of African origin and has its roots in a marginalized and under privileged society that struggle to find dignity and identity. Nevertheless, there is no standard to consider a church African, because there are some Churches that have European influence yet contextualized and indigenized enough to retain Africanness (Anderson & Otwang 1993:138)<sup>23</sup>. The African people, like people everywhere, have a strong spiritual hunger that needs to be appeased, a spiritual vacuum and a thirst which only a relationship with a deity can quench (Anderson 1992:117).

Nkurunziza (2013:69) notes that Pentecostal spirituality tends to gravitate towards the deep-seated beliefs and cultural values which constitute the essential cultural vectors curbing the African identity. In this regard, Pentecostalism is targeted at meeting various needs, whether physical, social or spiritual, by offering solutions to life’s challenges. According to Cox (2001:15), the greatest expression of Pentecostal Christianity has been the emergence of African Indigenous churches, which fall under the African Independent category. Historically, these and other independent Pentecostal groupings started emerging during the 1970s era (Anderson 2005:68). Currently, this category of Pentecostal Christianity is attracting large crowds and has developed a widely known and accepted style of presenting the gospel<sup>24</sup>. Anderson (2005:68) considers the newer face of African Pentecostal gatherings as fundamentally different from the Holy Spirit movements or the ‘Spirit’ churches that emerged earlier in the African Initiated Churches, although

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<sup>22</sup> “While both parties would consider the Bible and the Holy Spirit as primary sources of authority; Pentecostals emphasize more on the Spirit than the Fundamentals do, Fundamentalists on the other hand, place much more textual emphasis of the Bible as verbally inspired word for word” (Cox 2001:75).

<sup>23</sup> These arguments found basis on questions of syncretism.

<sup>24</sup> The flashy lifestyles of ministers on social media platforms, has attracted youths and those desiring material blessings.

there is consideration that most of these churches are a continuation of Pentecostalism in quite a different format.

The fluidity of Pentecostalism has the capacity to be at home anywhere in the world; for it can merge with the spirit possession in the Caribbean, ancestor veneration in Africa, folk healing in Brazil among others (Cox 2001:146). Nonetheless, Pentecostalism remains a recognizable biblical independent entity amidst cultural influences that it comes in collision with (Cox 2001:146). This flexible nature has contributed to the continuous confusion, where making a distinction between cultic movements and authentic gatherings has become quite a challenge, in the absence of proper discernment skills. However, this phenomenal power to embrace and transform almost anything it meets in the cultures, has become one of the strong qualities that gives Pentecostalism remarkable creativity and acceptance wherever it travels (Cox 2001:147). Here, Anderson & Otwang (1993:140) argue that Pentecostalism is more meaningful to many African people because it continued to retain some religious expressions which were also African.

### **2.3.1 Pentecostals in Southern Region of Africa**

Africa is a vast and diverse continent, hence, Pentecostalism, as Kalu (2008: ix) observes, has responded differently to various ecosystems and the Southern Region of Africa is not an exception. The coming of Pentecostalism to Africa brings to attention the mentioning of few pioneers who introduced it to the African community. Andrew Murray is regarded as one of the significant people who were instrumental in setting the stage of the Pentecostal revival in many African states and some other parts of the World (Burger and Nel 2008:26). Pentecostalism in South African history is also traced back to the ministry of John G Lake, whose ministry began in Zion City under Alexander Dowie of Chicago (Synan 2001:901). Unlike Nigeria and Ghana, where Pentecostal churches flourished by the 1980's Pentecostalism had little impact within the South African black communities before the 1994 elections (Anderson 2005:71)<sup>25</sup>. Arguably, South Africa has played a significant role in the spreading of Pentecostalism in Southern and central Africa, as “a nodal point from which black and white evangelists” reached places like Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and other countries in the region (Kalu 2008:54). Pentecostalism in Malawi, for example, benefited from various streams such as migration, where individuals who had gone to work abroad

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<sup>25</sup> However, it was a vibrant movement in the white communities, having churches like Rhema Ministries and New Covenant Ministries.

but returned to Malawi bringing back the gospel with them (Kalu 2008:60)<sup>26</sup>. Similarly, Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe came initially from the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) and Assemblies of God (AOG) in South Africa, thus by 1915, an AFM evangelist, Zacharia Manamela, initiated the enterprise in Gwanda and other rural areas (Kalu 2008:61). Although black nationals constitute the poorer majority in Africa compared to their white counterparts, some would tend to think that Pentecostalism is just for the townships, yet it is very vibrant in the cities as well (Cox 2001:15)<sup>27</sup>.

### **2.3.2 Pentecostalism in South Africa**

South Africa is considered one of the first countries, besides Kenya and Nigeria, on the African continent to receive Pentecostalism – as early as 1908 (Anderson, 2005:67). In the document by the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE)<sup>28</sup>, South Africa is reported to be very religious, having approximately 80 percent of the population professing to be Christians (Bernstein 2008a:06). Furthermore, this report notes that about 12,5 million South Africans are considered as belonging to a non-mainstream church's affiliation, having their numerical growth on the rise whilst those of the mainstream category have been recorded as static (Bernstein 2008a:06)<sup>29</sup>. The story of Pentecostalism in South Africa, especially within the Apostolic Faith Mission, is often dominated by the enterprise of John Graham Lake (1870-1935) according to Kalu (2008:55)<sup>30</sup>. Lake's ministry began in Zion City under Alexander Dowie (Synan 2001:901). Dowie, who was born in Edinburgh in 1847, found the lime light by refusing to explain the death of those who were diseased as 'the will of God,' but began healing the sick through prayer (Hollenweger 1972:116). Anderson (1992:20) observes that many Pentecostals in South Africa trace their roots from the events that took place in Wakkerstroom in the south-eastern Transvaal, which in turn were influenced by happenings that took place in Zion City (Illinois)<sup>31</sup>, and later by the Azusa street wave of revival.

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<sup>26</sup> Especially during the denominational establishment of the Apostolic Faith Mission.

<sup>27</sup> Cox (2001:15), argues for Pentecostal movement as "an urban phenomenon that is not limited to any poverty datum line." This suggests that the Pentecostal experience and impact is can be relevant to any culture, race or society.

<sup>28</sup> CDE report [Online] Available: <http://www.cde.org.za> [2017, Sept 21].

<sup>29</sup> The 1996 to 2001 census identifies the Pentecostal and charismatic grouping as the fastest growing branch of Christianity, having 55 percent in comparison with other groupings.

<sup>30</sup> He attracted the locals through faith healing campaigns, deliverances, prophetic utterances, spiritual revival (57).

<sup>31</sup> The 'First Apostle' over the (CCA) Church in Zion was Alexander Dowie.

Locally, Nicholas Bhengu (1909-1986) is viewed as one of the renowned African Church Fathers of Pentecostalism, who played a significant role in the establishment of Pentecostalism in South Africa through his involvement with the Assemblies of God, proving that God can heal the sick (Hollenweger (1972:129). According to Kalu (2008:57), Bhengu founded the 'Back to God' campaign that served as an instrument for expansion into southern and central Africa. Another significant figure during the establishment of Pentecostalism in South Africa is Andrew Murray (1828-1917) who, although a prominent minister with the Dutch Reformed Minister in Bloemfontein, Worcester, Wellington and Cape town – believed in the power of prayer (Hollenweger (1972:114).

### **2.3.2.1 Neo-Pentecostalism in South Africa**

In Africa, branches of Classical Pentecostal churches are fewer in number compared to the indigenous ones (Kalu 2008:14). Here, Hollenweger (1972:151) finds that amongst Classical Pentecostals, each power struggle targeted at leadership or doctrinal issues led to the founding of Neo-Pentecostal churches while Nkurunziza (2013:60) sees the dramatic church growth taking place in Pentecostal churches within South Africa as resulting from the miraculous happenings taking place within these settings. During the Apartheid era, Pentecostalism birthed fewer church denominations, which were mostly driven by western missionaries. It is also the case that post-apartheid Pentecostalism has given birth to many indigenous churches led and founded by locals, such as those who do not hold any western supervision or influence (Anderson 2005:71)<sup>32</sup>. Here, the Neo-Pentecostal grouping does not only subscribe to 'white garment churches' or Zionistic movements (most commonly known as African Independent Churches) but also to the independent and indigenous prophetic movements, who consider themselves as belonging to a wider Pentecostal movement, with most them coming from older churches such as the Classical Pentecostal Churches (Cox 2001:74).

Anderson (1992:07) identifies three distinct types of African Pentecostal Churches in South Africa, namely the Pentecostal Mission Churches (PMCs), Independent Pentecostal Churches (IPCs) and

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<sup>32</sup> When west African preachers began to visit South Africa in the 1990's and circulating outside western charismatic type churches, they went ahead igniting the flame of Neo-Pentecostalism.



the Indigenous Pentecostal-type churches (IPTCs)<sup>33</sup>. In South Africa, the CDE report states that the arrival of African Independent Churches complicates the Pentecostal church classification (Bernstein 2008a:08). The attempt to categorize these church gatherings has been a matter of study for many scholars in trying to figure out the appropriate nomenclature of these church groupings without misrepresenting them. Although there are several categories of Pentecostal-like churches, this study makes a deliberate interrogation of the Neo-Pentecostal churches in Africa, such as those led by a ‘prophet’ or a ‘prophetic’ figure. It is also the case that currently, various indigenous and non-registered churches constitute the Neo-Pentecostal grouping, making it difficult to generalize this Pentecostal grouping. The use of terms like ‘independent’ and ‘indigenous’ may cause some clarity complications as one is not always sure what characteristics determine whether a given church is truly ‘independent’ or ‘indigenous’ (Anderson 1992:05)<sup>34</sup>. Hollenweger (1972:149) makes a distinction between Neo-Pentecostal churches and African Independent Churches when he refers to AICs as falling under the ‘Zionist-type Churches’ category. Similarly, Anderson (2001:56) distinguishes between Neo-Pentecostals and the Zionist-type Churches where he describes the Zionist-type Churches as those who refer to themselves as *ama-ziyoni*. There are, however, some newly established Neo-Pentecostal churches, especially in rural areas, which may not be keen to operate under the umbrella of Zionist even if they bear Zionist tendencies in their gatherings. Here, Anderson (1992:03) refers to Neo-Pentecostal Churches as those churches that have their roots in the older Charismatic Movement. In this thesis, Neo-Pentecostal churches in Africa refers to newly established churches founded by locals especially ‘prophets’, who started indigenous prophetic ministries, although they subscribe to traditional liturgy of Classical Pentecostals. Kalu (2008:15) finds that many of these indigenous churches designate a ministry name according to their ministerial emphasis such as evangelism, deliverance, child evangelism, or by their theological emphasis such as prosperity, holiness, prophecy or healing.

As stated by early Pentecostal leaders, Pentecostalism ceases to be a single denomination or a creed but a movement that transcends ecclesiastical boundaries (Cox 2001:246). Within this view, there are individuals who bear Pentecostal styles of worship, but belonging to a denomination that does not subscribe to Pentecostal doctrines. Nowadays, there are many Neo-Pentecostal gatherings

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<sup>33</sup> PMCs origins are predominantly white ‘mission’ churches; IPCs are those exclusive to black leadership and are independent of white control; and IPTCs are those churches also known as the ‘Spirit-type’ churches or ‘Zionist-type’ churches (Anderson, 1992:07).

<sup>34</sup> Some interchangeably make use of these terms referring to one and the same thing.



that do not use the term “Pentecostal” in their organizational titles, yet they can be classified under the Neo-Pentecostal bracket (Cox 2001:246). Their leadership is at most autonomous as opposed to Classical Pentecostal local churches that are run by certain constitutional and governmental bodies. Most of these churches do not have any permanent title deeds over church buildings, but make use of temporary structures such as tents, hotels and classrooms for their services. In this thesis, Neo-Pentecostal African churches refer to newly established Pentecostal churches founded by indigenous self-titled prophets who emphasize the centrality of the prophetic in practice<sup>35</sup>. These churches emphasize the importance of the prophetic or prophetic gestures. Thus, the Neo-Pentecostal movement in South Africa has not managed to establish a coherent, uniform church structure - their religious expression can be considered as diverse, their teachings syncretic, their structures too porous, their rejection of a church hierarchy too strong, and their commitment to personal salvation through the Holy Spirit too individualistic (Dickow et al., 2012:19).

## **2.5 Healing discourse**

The way healing is understood determines the way people appropriate healing strategies. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines and describes healing as encompassing many other components that facilitate the total wellbeing of a person<sup>36</sup>. There are various means that lead to the way humanity understands healing. The necessary and relevant means discussed in this thesis are; the spiritual approach to healing, the medical or physical approach to healing, and the psychological approach to healing. Here, the healing methods can be said to have shaped behavior either positively and negatively with regards to the relationship between sickness and health.

### **2.5.1 Spiritual approaches to healing**

Generally, religions of the world embrace a spiritual approach towards sickness. African traditional healers or witchdoctors have been known for playing a role in tackling spiritual problems within society. In Zimbabwe, *uroyi* or *wizardry*, which in previous years was considered the act of placating evil spirits and demons according to African traditions, is now considered the source or cause of illnesses, bad luck and family discord (Cox 2001:245). Within a Christian framework; whilst some Christians believe in the power of sanctification, others have a belief in

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<sup>35</sup> These are rogue ministries that do not have any affiliation to Classical Pentecostal Church but subscribe to the notion of ‘spiritual’ sons and fathers.

<sup>36</sup> World Health Organization. 2017. Frequently Asked Questions. *What is the WHO definition of health?* [Online]. <http://www.who.int/suggestions/faq/en/> [2017, 24 October].

causality. The general Pentecostal view on the theology of healing uses the examples by Jesus and the apostles to demonstrate the explanation of causality (Kalu 2010:209). According to Kalu (2008:264), the contentious aspect of Pentecostal theology is the connection between personal sin, sins of ancestors, and the health of a patient. The causal connection to sin is, however, rejected by the gospel - healthy sinners and sick saints (Kalu 2008:264). According to Wagner (1979:239), no one can fully grasp God's position on sickness and health, thus, sickness may not necessarily originate from a causal effect.

The second view of Pentecostals is the diagnostic view, which explains how Pentecostals diagnose a disease (Kalu (2010:209)<sup>37</sup>. The diagnostic view suggests a deductive approach to healing that suggests that there is no sickness in heaven, therefore, sickness is not the will of God (Horn 1989:15). Here, the relationship of humanity with sin has led to the understanding that illness is a spiritual punishment or judgement, thus, a spiritual remedy should be employed. The spiritual understanding of healing, to some, has emerged from their knowledge of covenant theology (Kalu (2010:216)<sup>38</sup>.

Furthermore, Christian terminology discusses spiritual healing referred to 'faith' healing or 'divine' healing. These two can be used interchangeably depending on the context and preference. According to the CDE report (Bernstein 2008a:10); "Pentecostals believe that those baptized in the Holy Spirit may receive other supernatural gifts that purportedly existed in the early church, such as the ability to prophesy, interpret strange tongues, and heal, thus leading to faith healing characteristic of the Pentecostal churches". Badenhorst et. al (1986:209), however, distinguish faith healing from divine healing when they point out that faith healing can be used to describe any form of healing brought about by faith or a positive expectation. Here, the belief and acceptance of a positive result by someone who practices this<sup>39</sup>, divine healing relates to healing as a result of prayer and faith in God and on merit of Christ's love. Relating the 'Doom' phenomenon to faith healing suggests that such a practice may be driven by a certain expectation or belief, but not necessary a result of prayer to God. Furthermore, because expectations can be

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<sup>37</sup> Gifts of word of knowledge such as prophecy and discerning of spirits, are diagnostic tools

<sup>38</sup> Knowing that healing is provided for, through Christ's covenantal love towards mankind.

<sup>39</sup> Those who practice faith healing can do so without trusting in God or even making an acknowledgement of God; thus, it may take the form of positive thinking or healing may take place through hypnosis.

disappointing or rather false, there is a possibility that ‘Doom’ may not be effective in transmitting healing; thus, the healing technique has been concluded as a dangerous healing practice.

The basic ways of attaining healing through a spiritual exercise is through prayer or meditation, laying hands on those in need of healing, symbolic ministration and deliverance.

#### **2.5.1.1 The role of spiritual gifts in spirituality**

Wagner (1979:238) defines spiritual gift(s) “as the special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ, to serve as human intermediaries through whom God cures illnesses without natural interventions”. The way spiritual gifts are understood in NPCs in Africa has, therefore, a bearing on the ways in which these gifts are used/exercised. The biblical reference in 1 Cor 12:28 is literally gifts (plural) of healings (plural), implying many varieties of the healing giftings for different kinds of illnesses (Wagner 1979:238). This understanding indicates that healing power should be rooted in the gift(s). Thus, the use of dangerous symbols when conducting healing, can be seen as man-made tricks aimed at baffling spectating eyes. Spiritual gifts should not be interpreted in terms of power, since the gift of healing does not give healers supernatural powers over illness. Rather, he or she is simply a channel through whom God works and manifests His sovereign grace (Wagner 1979:239).

#### **2.5.1.2 The laying on of hands in relation to spiritual healing**

Pentecostals stress the importance of faith, fasting and prayers to God (Anderson & Otwang 1993:73). Here, the belief that God’s spirit is an anointing power or force enabling desired results. When that power rests upon a person, that person can experience healing and prosperity (Kalu 2010:208). According to Gaiser (2010:173), laying hands on someone can, in other contexts, be considered as a violent act (Gen. 37:22) or a positive act associated with sacrifice (Lev. 1:4) or a commissioning (Num.27:23; Acts 6:6); or it can be an action associated with blessing (Gen. 48:14) and healing (2 Kings 4:34; Luke 4:40), including exorcism (Luke 13:11-13), and spirit baptism. In many Pentecostal churches, a prayer line or altar call for healing is conducted for the sick, thus, some give testimonies right after the laying of hands or prayer conducted, some testify later (Anderson & Otwang, 1993:73). However, since there are no clear specifics as to how, where and what kind or manner the laying of hands should be administered, this study assumes that human conscience shapes behavior especially in relation to bodily respect and honor of the other person. Unless a gift is contaminated, as it sometimes happens, by claims of gnostic superiority as

Hollenweger (1972)<sup>40</sup> notes, such “miracles” are “ambiguous and not specifically Christian, which means that they cannot be understood as tests of faith (Gaiser 2010:174).

### **2.5.1.3 Symbolic practices in relation to spiritual healing**

Although other Pentecostals emphasize healing through prayer, in the indigenous Pentecostal type churches, divine “healing is effected through prayer and the use of symbolic objects” (Anderson & Otwang 1993:73). Kalu (2010:218) observes that the aspect of using symbols when conducting healing evolved from the literal interpretation of the biblical text. As such, some congregants of the Pentecostal churches regard the use of symbolic objects as unnecessary because they understand that healing power comes from God alone, therefore, healing entailing the laying of hands is conducted (Anderson & Otwang 1993:72-73)<sup>41</sup>. The leader of the Zion Christian Church ZCC in South Africa, Engenas Lekganyane, who in his early ministry days after leaving a Classical Pentecostal church, resorted to a healing phenomenon whereby he would ‘bless’ various objects like strips of papers, needles, cloths, strings, water for healing and yard sticks (Anderson 1992:43)<sup>42</sup>. Similar controversial healing traits can be seen today within the Neo-Pentecostal Churches where some church leaders have resorted to dangerous practices.

### **2.5.2 Medical approaches to healing**

The majority of African Pentecostals in the early years of this century used to be opposed to the idea of making use of medical doctors and their medicine. “This position has significantly changed as people are free to consult medical practitioners and to visit clinics when necessary” (Anderson & Otwang 1993:73). God’s wisdom is also revealed in their medical and scientific enterprise. Whilst some spiritual leaders ascribe all causes of physical suffering to evil forces and to supernatural powers, others privilege natural causes, matters of hygiene, and bacterial theories (Kalu 2008:264). Thus, spiritual gifts of healing do not necessarily make doctors obsolete (Wagner 1979:239). The medical approach to healing is targeted at the physical or psychological aspect of the body - when an illness is sponsored from a spiritual cause, physical medicine becomes obsolete. Furthermore, the ways of treatment usually range from medicine, laser treatment to clinical

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<sup>40</sup> Hollenweger (1972), *The Pentecostals: The Charismatic Movement in the Churches*. Translated by R. A Wilson. Minneapolis: Augsburg. Pg. 371

<sup>41</sup> Chapter 4: section 4.3 on Classical Pentecostals

<sup>42</sup> These controversial practices have laid a distance between the Pentecostal churches and ZCC

psychology. In some instances, bodily exercise, mental health, healthy food stuff and hygiene are promoted as leading to a healthy lifestyle.

### **2.5.2.1 Healing at a Cost**

Mangezi & Banda (2017:01) argue that, “unlike the traditional model where to be a pastor amounted to renouncing the world to pursue a heavenly spiritual calling, the entrepreneurial model presents true spirituality and ministry as are authenticated by socio-economic progress.” Therefore, wealthy pastors are considered as true servants of God and those pastors who are poor, are considered as genuine ministers. Hence, many young pastors are commercializing spiritual gifts, especially “one on one” prophetic encounters as a quick means to wealth accumulation. Generally, the medical approach to healing is mostly accompanied with a financial cost to it - consultations, admissions, surgical operations, rehabilitations, bed recoveries, forms of medicine and specialized treatment often comes at a fee. The focus has drifted from ministerial development to financial gains (Mangezi & Banda 2017:03).

However, many African societies have been bombarded with unemployment, poverty and harsh diseases and, thus, cannot afford proper and rightful medical treatment. As a result, many people resort to ‘spiritual’ means in the attempt to relieve themselves of the pain or the sad feelings of watching their loved ones suffer from sickness. Furthermore, many professional medical institutions do not accept animals, farming proceeds or voluntary work in exchange for treatment. As a result, many Africans have preferred channels of healing that are within their means. This has contributed to the prominence of spiritual leaders such as traditional healers, prophets and church leaders within impoverished societies. Some of these spiritual leaders are, however, compromising their services for gain and profit, taking advantage of the powerless. Mangezi & Banda (2017:01), “This poses a number of implications, foremost being that church spaces, spiritual conversions, certain spiritual disciplines, membership into certain churches and submission to the leadership of certain prophets and pastors are now considered as steps towards economic emancipation and prosperity.”

### **2.5.3 Healing as holistic**

When Christians ask God to heal in prayer, the healing expected is not dependent on prayers made but on God’s sovereignty. The working of prayer is not a human product of good deeds, but the power of God active in His will. The holistic view of healing seeks to connect all the elements

surrounding the recovery process. Hence, a holistic expression of healing defines healing as a multi-dimensional component that has different facets to it. Here, sickness includes more than physical illness and, therefore, healing should become multi-faceted (Kalu 2010:214). When healing is understood beyond the removal of diseases, then a holistic approach becomes necessary. In many african communities, the language of health connects health to life and harmony with creation (Kalu 2010:210). Although in Africa, colonialism nearly eroded the holistic connection between the spiritual and physical aspects of healing, many African communities share an understanding that health “is not material, but reflects an inner peace, satisfaction or contentment and maintenance of social networks” (Kalu 2010: 214-16). Kalu notes two key aspects in the Pentecostal theology of health and healing suggesting that healing is not simply physical cure. According to him, if the sickness is caused by spiritual causes then healing ceases to be physical but spiritual, if sickness is caused by unhealthy foods, then diets have to be deliberate (Kalu 2010: 209).

## **2.6 Healing within the NPCs**

Like the classical Pentecostals, there is an emphasis on divine healing within Neo-Pentecostal churches although methods that have been established to obtain this healing differ from how Classical Pentecostals use the general practice of laying of hands on the sick to transmit healing (Anderson 1992:67)<sup>43</sup>. The most significant church growth is considered to have taken place in Pentecostal and Independent Pentecostal-like churches within South Africa because of the miraculous happenings taking place within these settings (Nkurunziza, 2013:60). As it was with Azusa Street experience with Aimee McPherson and those that followed, healing has played an important role in the establishment of the Neo-Pentecostal Churches (Cox 2001:254). Besides this healing heritage, there is an intrinsic desire for deliverance and the prophetic within Neo-Pentecostals in South Africa.

Two classes of the Neo-Pentecostals may be identified: those who emerged during the 70s and 80s era, and those who are post-apartheid in South Africa. The Pentecostal movement of the period of 1970-90s had seen the rise of young people who started preaching without undergoing any form of theological training. These young people, deployed the power of mimicry, as young men and

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<sup>43</sup> Neo-Pentecostal Churches use of various objects such as staffs, anointed water or towels and many more.

women who watched enough videos and listened to enough cassettes, imitated what they saw and heard and preached to large audiences (Kalu 2008:124). The pattern has continued to date - young people are leading big ministries, without much theological education. In the 70s, many Malawians who lived in Blantyre witnessed a revival whereby young boys and girls, who referred to themselves as the *aliliki*, attracted crowds by conducting large revival meetings (Kalu 2008:31). Beyond this healing heritage, there is an intrinsic desire for deliverance and the prophetic within the post-apartheid generation of Neo-Pentecostals in Africa. Neo-Pentecostalism seems to adopt the traditional African ways more easily than most other types of Christianity did (Anderson 1992:117). The Neo-Pentecostals in South Africa have indulged healing methods that endanger the lives of people. Such practices will be elaborated further in the next chapter.

### **2.6.1 Healing as a dangerous phenomenon**

Deliverance from demonic forces, prophetic utterances and decrees, have been a prominent part of the Pentecostal praxis (Anderson 2009:646). Healing is, therefore, a widespread phenomenon that should be analyzed. Healing in its various forms has proven to be the desired result although the steps taken towards attaining that healing within Neo-Pentecostal churches in Africa have been contested. NPCs have never given up the relationship between healing and prayer but enhanced it with strange instruments (Cox 2001:258)<sup>44</sup>. These kinds of healing techniques can be classified under symbolic healing, whereby objects are brought up as instruments are either seen as enhancing faith or transmitting the healing power. Since these practices can be classified under symbolic healing, the issue is not in whether symbols are used when conducting healing, but in the types of objects used in symbolic healing (Anderson & Otwang, 1993:73). NPCs healing techniques include snake eating, the chewing of tree leaves and grass, the drinking of petrol and other harmful household detergents and the spraying of doom insecticide on the recipients of healing. This has been dubbed a dangerous phenomenon owing to the threats posed by the usage of these harmful objects<sup>45</sup>. These and other dangerous practices are thriving on the ignorance of those who are in desperate situations or the ignorance of the perpetrators.

The means of attaining healing within Neo-Pentecostal African churches is primarily symbolic; healing operated through the introduction of dangerous objects. However, there are various

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<sup>44</sup> The introduction of using petroleum, the eating of snakes or grass and the prophet of 'Doom'

<sup>45</sup> These have been more elaborated in the next Chapter: section 3.5



implication attached to the healing phenomenon, making the practice dangerous<sup>46</sup>. The means of conducting healing have been contested by the CRL Rights Commission because of the harmful threats associated with their continual usage. Reasons for contestation are primarily hinged on medical, ethical and the Christian faith. This thesis argues for prayer as a first step towards acquiring spiritual healing in harmony with the environment.

### **2.6.2 Healing in relation to power**

The healing phenomenon and power dynamics displayed within Neo-Pentecostal African churches has become, in several instances, an occasion for the exploitation of those who are vulnerable and poor (Anderson 2009:646). In African Pentecostal scholarship, healing camps have sprouted all over the continent as society continues to combat epidemics of various sorts (Kalu 2010:209). There is a possible relationship between power and healing, especially in cases where the healers have mastered the art of dealing with social ills. Here, the challenge with regards to power usage has left many people, especially women and children, vulnerable to abusive tendencies.

Anderson & Otwang (1993:18) note that several members of various Pentecostal churches said they were in the church because it was the one revealed to them by an ancestor and that if they would go to a certain church to meet the prophet, they would be healed<sup>47</sup>. Gullibility and lack of scriptural knowledge has led many congregants into believing that power lies with the ‘Man/Woman of God.’ Thus, power ought to be articulated in terms of the power in the ‘Word of God’ as opposed to the person used to transmit the power. This intersection will be dealt with in greater depth in the chapters that follow.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the historical account of the Pentecostal movement as well as the understanding of the Pentecostal terminology from a biblical perspective. The chapter has also distinguished the Classical Pentecostal formation of the movement from the second (charismatic) wave and the third wave, which may be identified as Neo-Pentecostalism. It is argued that Pentecostalism is a global phenomenon that had significant revival in America and spread throughout the world through missionaries and that it also reached the shores of Africa and that many countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and those in the SADC region experienced the fire

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<sup>46</sup> Physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual and medical implications, this are elaborated as the study progresses

<sup>47</sup> Some of them believe that their healing is conditional, if they remain under that church they maintain their healing



of the Pentecostal movement. Indeed, South Africa became one of the earlier countries to welcome the movement, leading to the establishment of Classical denominations such as the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) and Assemblies of God (AOG). As such, the establishment of Pentecostalism in South Africa laid the foundation for the Neo-Pentecostal experience, having indigenous people founding their own churches. Sadly, within Neo-Pentecostalism, a unique breed has arisen in recent years that has set social media platforms abuzz with controversy due to the introduction of dangerous healing practices.

This chapter has also explored the conceptual understanding of healing within Neo-Pentecostalism, especially in relation to the dangerous healing practices. Here, healing has been presented as a global phenomenon that is understood or attained differently. Thus, there are several approaches related to how healing is appropriated in various sectors of religion and medical science. The scientific environments would prefer the medical or scientific approach, whilst the religious community would embrace healing as a spiritual phenomenon. This has led the Neo-Pentecostal churches to address issues related to illness spiritually. The chapter has discussed the spiritual approach in terms of the role of spiritual gifts in healing, the role of symbolic usage in healing and the laying of hands in relation to prayer. A holistic approach has been brought into discussion, analyzing the concept of healing in a broader sense.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE CONTROVERSIAL HEALING PRACTICES AND THE ‘PROPHET OF DOOM’

#### 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter narrates a historical account of the Pentecostal movement from the Classical Pentecostals to the Neo-Pentecostals’ era in Africa. In an attempt to make a description of the state of Neo-Pentecostals in the Southern Region of the African continent, the chapter acknowledges the diversity in experience and understanding of spirituality amongst the Pentecostals. Following this acknowledgement, it should be noted that Pentecostalism throughout history has witnessed various forms of healing practices depending on the beliefs upheld. It can, however be argued that there are some healing practices within Pentecostalism that are legitimate and necessary, whilst other forms of healing; especially within the Neo-Pentecostal context, are highly dangerous and controversial<sup>48</sup>. Having analyzed the understanding of healing within Neo-Pentecostal African churches with regard to the introduction of dangerous healing practices in the preceding chapter, the current chapter will investigate what is going on within these churches and what factors led to the acceptance and perpetuation of these practices by religious leaders on their followers.

Whilst it is important to analyze the healing phenomenon within Neo-Pentecostal African churches, this chapter will explore how African cultures make use of symbolic healing, analyzing the similarity of practice between African spirituality and the forms of healing within Neo-Pentecostal African churches. The Limpopo based prophet, who conducted healing and deliverance through the spraying of “Doom” insecticide on congregants, will be brought into focus, as well as other examples of the so called ‘prophets’, who are practicing similar dangerous healing practices. This chapter will conclude by reflecting on the impact of dangerous healing practices in African societies and the challenge they pose to the congregants, who are also experiencing socio-economic hardship. Here, the factors that lead to these dangerous healing practices will be examined.

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<sup>48</sup> Some newly established Pentecostal churches commonly make use of strange objects such as ash and papers when conducting deliverance sessions (Kalu 2008:70).

### 3.2 African spirituality and Neo-Pentecostal use of symbolic healing

Spittler (2002:1096) “defines spirituality as a cluster of acts and sentiments that are informed by beliefs and values that characterize a specific religious community” while Albrecht (1992:108) describes spirituality as “lived experience which actualizes a fundamental dimension of the human being<sup>49</sup>.” From an African perspective, spirituality is not limited to outward practices and behaviors associated with religious convictions, but involves the internal, personal and emotional expressions of joy, peace, confidence, comfort or sorrow resulting from faith within (Nkurunziza 2013:61). In his thesis, Nkurunziza views ‘African Spirituality’ as referring to certain core beliefs and practices, which are deeply embedded in the diverse African cultures and settings, whereby such beliefs are valued and venerated. Several parts of the continent believes in the existence of evil forces such as demons that exist to destroy family units, environments and livelihood; hence, the reality of demonic forces calls for a counter-spiritual solution to initiate liberation and deliverance<sup>50</sup>.

Kalu (2008:180) sees witchcraft as a force that operates by accessing the latent powers of the soul, resulting in manipulation of life. However, many Africans uphold spirituality or spiritual identity with great reverence so as to keep homes secure from opposing forces of darkness that derail destinies. Therefore, African Pentecostal spirituality is linked to the way Pentecostals have attempted to deal with ‘African’ fears and problems (Nkurunziza, 2013:60)<sup>51</sup>. While reasons for the growth of Pentecostalism are too diverse and complex to exhaust in a single research project, the introduction of Pentecostalism to African communities has been a great success largely because of the way many African cultures view and understand spiritual matters. Amongst many spiritual activities that are popular within Pentecostalism, central to the Pentecostal worship and liturgy, is the experience of being possessed by the spirit, receiving of spiritual gifts and breaking out of the constraints as one expresses the true self in worship (Cox 2001:200). The interesting phenomenon about Neo-Pentecostals in Africa is that they are not mono-denominational neither mono-cultural but are also vast and diverse, which has resulted in many African communities finding an easy connection with Pentecostalism. Spiritual leaders, who bear titles such as *n’anga* in Zimbabwe, a

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<sup>49</sup> The spiritual dimension is the whole of one’s religious experience, thought patterns, beliefs or emotions and behavior in respect to divine beings.

<sup>50</sup> “This is pertinent in regions whereby unseen forces of evil are believed to be so prevalent” (Anderson 2009:647).

<sup>51</sup> Sickness, poverty, unemployment and issues related to witchcraft has led many Africans to seek for people who profess having some spiritual power.

*malam* in Nigeria, a *sangoma* in South Africa and a *moruti* within Churches among other, have been recognized and celebrated as key figures within many African communities in the light of how they deal with spiritual matters. Within South Africa, many black-dominated societies are comprised of the celebration of a kingly figure and the celebration of a role played by the medicine man also known as *sangoma* (Hollenweger 1972:158).

To an extent, African traditional communities are health-oriented communities; in their traditional beliefs, protection and healing rituals are prominent (Nkurunziza 2013:69). Taking into consideration the interrelatedness and similarities in the spiritual practices between African traditional healers and Neo-Pentecostal prophets, some of the dangerous healing practices, bear similarities with the manner in which African traditional healers and prophets conduct healing. The *modus operandi* of many Neo-Pentecostal prophets often appears to bear similar traits to that of the traditional healer in that both the traditional healers and the prophets try to diagnose the cause of the patient's cause of illness, and they often locate it in wicked spirits (Cox 2001:255). Thereafter, they often offer a conditional practical response in the 'practical' attempt to deal with spiritual matters, and it is at this point they result to engaging dangerous healing practices. In most cases, while the traditional man tries to exorcise the evil spirits with divination, usually many Christian prophets simply makes anointed prayers to cast out 'demonic forces' (Cox 2001:255).

Nowadays, there are instances whereby a diviner or a spiritual leader from a traditional context would shift genre by appropriating some aspects of Christian symbols in the attempt "to create an emergent religious form that could respond to the immediate needs of the community (Kalu 2008:29)." This has led to the inception of traditional healers into Neo-Pentecostal African settings, on the one hand. Although Neo-Pentecostal leaders would probably deny any association or collaboration with traditional healers, some traditional healers consider themselves on equal footing with church leaders and argue that the difference only lies in mere cultural expression of spirituality<sup>52</sup>. On the other hand, there are some Neo-Pentecostals who have seemingly, gone to the extent of attributing traditional methods of spirituality as means to attract many cultural Africans to their gatherings<sup>53</sup>. It could even be argued that some Neo-Pentecostal upcoming leaders now masquerading as 'prophets' are conducting dangerous healing practices as a means of

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<sup>52</sup> This has led to the belief that Jesus Christ, who is the center of the Christian faith, is only a prophet for the western world; but for Africans, many would prescribe and prefer ancestry worship as indigenous and fitting for Africans.

<sup>53</sup> The desire for prominence and fame has led many up and coming Neo-Pentecostals astray.

attracting fame. Anderson (1992:06) finds that the ability of Neo-Pentecostalism to adapt to any cultural background makes it difficult to discern a clear distinction between an African expression of Christianity and Christianity that has been absorbed into locally based cultic traditions. The interrelatedness between African spiritualism and their use of symbolic objects in healing has contributed to the significant shift taking place with regard to the methods used by Neo-Pentecostals in conducting healing and deliverance. Here, the dividing line between the ancestor who inspires diviners and the Holy Spirit who inspires prophecy is seemingly becoming very thin as Anderson (1992:97) observes. As such, the Neo-Pentecostal emphasis on spiritual experiences, controversy and uneasiness has accompanied many Neo-Pentecostal upcoming prophets who could be viewed as having ‘gone rogue’ in pursuit of fame and power. Arguably, newer African-styles of appropriating healing and deliverance within Neo-Pentecostalism have retained a cultic disposition in both expression and operation. Considering that African cultures are deeply embedded in African spirituality, it is probable that some Neo-Pentecostals in Africa are influenced by African spirituality when it comes to the use of symbolic objects, bearing a traditional disposition rather than a scriptural one. Nkurunziza (2013:68) notes similarities between Neo-Pentecostalism and traditional African religions in relation to awareness of the spiritual world, belief in divine healing and exorcism of evil spirits. Others have argued that traditional healers and Neo-Pentecostals share a common appeal - the combat against evil forces (Kalu 2008:171).

According to Harvey Cox (2001:14), Pentecostalism is regarded as one of the most experiential movements in Christianity, arising from a century whereby followers protested against “coldness” of traditional worship. The desire for greater experiential manifestations has, therefore, led to the introduction of strange symbols into Neo-Pentecostal African churches. This has, however, become problematic as dangerous healing practices are fast becoming a common trend in Africa.

Generally, various controversial expressions of symbolic healing have flooded Neo-Pentecostal African churches and Southern Africa is no exception. In South Africa, the indulgence of some African Neo-Pentecostal prophets in dangerous healing practices has left social media platforms buzzing with sentiments of shock and amazement. Various forms of dangerous healing practices such as stepping on a woman’s private parts, eating grass and snakes, petrol drinking, and the spraying of ‘Doom’ on congregants, has left both Christians and non-believers with questions with

regards to this kind of ministry. Cox (2001:16) who views Pentecostalism as an ecumenical movement rather than a narrow cult, observes that some elements found within Pentecostalism may be considered borrowed from other sources, and not all of them are Christian. It is interesting to note that symbolic things such as water, red cloths, money, new plates and bowls, are objects used in marine spirit cults among many ethnic groups in West Africa (Kalu 2008:79). In the Southern hemisphere of the African continent, it has been historically known that Zion type or white garment Independent Churches, are sometime classified as cultic groupings, and known for making use of objects in their attempt to exorcise demonic forces. The current Neo-Pentecostal contention is that there is a slim distinction between the white garment prophets, traditional leaders and the Neo-Pentecostal prophets when it comes to their approach to healing. Here, the Neo-Pentecostal healing phenomenon has become the site of asking difficult questions. Having said that, a further exposition into what may be termed “strange” activities or rather, “dangerous” healing practices will be undertaken in the next section.

### **3.3 The prophets of ‘Doom’**

According to Kalu (2008:35), at the turn of the century at the time of the twilight of colonization, several prophetic figures emerged all over the African continent. These were the agents who reanimated spirituality in Pentecostalism. The recent trend has seen the rise of prophets and indigenous churches that are attracting large crowds due to prophetic ministry. The person of a prophet within Neo-Pentecostal churches in Africa, has been venerated as highly infallible and endowed with superpowers, whilst a prophet, should be understood as a charismatic figure as opposed to the idea of being an indigenous god (Kalu 2008:36). This has led many people to assume that their salvation is dependent upon their submission to such ministers.

In South Africa, a Limpopo self-titled prophet has recently introduced the use of ‘Doom’ insecticide on congregants when conducting healing sessions. Behind his convictions, he stated that, “with God all things are possible,” while insisting that this kind of healing is a divine act, which also suggests that healing can take place beyond human imagination<sup>54</sup>. However, the spraying of doom is performative and disruptive to the normative church practices. Mount Zion General Assembly (MZGA) Facebook account made a public post on their Facebook handle about

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<sup>54</sup> Available [Online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWWz7hhstX0>

the events that took place under the prophetic leadership of prophet Lethebo at an all-night prayer meeting held in Mookgopong, Limpopo South Africa. Images dated 19 November 2016 show prophet Lethebo spraying ‘Doom’ insecticide on congregants who needed prayers for healing<sup>55</sup>. A comment on the same Facebook post reads: “Doom is just a name, but when you speak to it to become a healing product, it does, people get healed and delivered through doom.” The same prayer meeting displayed images showing another volunteer being sprayed ‘doom’ insecticide onto his face. Maggie Maluleka testimonial on the (MZGA) Facebook post states: “I have pains on my waist since I gave birth to my child in January 2014; I haven’t seen my periods; my ear was also painful, but the man of God sprayed ‘Doom’ on me and my ear was healed and don’t feel any waist pains anymore.” Other testimonials brought fourth at MZGA church included some who intended to become active in soccer, and ‘Doom’ insecticide was sprayed on them for better performance. One of the images that trended on social media platforms like Facebook, shows prophet Lethebo spraying ‘Doom’ insecticide onto a woman identified as Mrs. Mitala<sup>56</sup>. The comment on the image states: “The Prophet called sick people to come forward, she went to the forth and told the Prophet that she suffers from ulcer. The Prophet sprayed ‘Doom’ on her and she received her healing and deliverance.”

Looking further into the controversial ‘Doom’ practice, the South African Broadcasting Cooperation (SABC) Digital News published on their YouTube handle an interview with prophet Lethebo on their news platform dubbed: “I am not ashamed of the gospel I preach - "Prophet of Doom<sup>57</sup>". This interview dated 21 November 2016, was the attempt to get clarity on the dangerous healing practice. In the interview conducted by the SABC news crew, Prophet Lethebo made remarks such as: “laying on of hands is elementary teaching, it shows you are limited; hence a young man must rise and show the world that God can do it, and with God all things are possible.” Another interview was conducted by the eNCA news broadcast on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 2016. In the interview, Prophet Lethebo Rabalago received questions with regard to his knowledge of the product ‘Doom’, and his response was “once you are in the in the spirit, you forget about the

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<sup>55</sup> Mookgopong Night Prayer. 2016. Available: <https://www.facebook.com/Lethebo/> Accessed [Online: 2017, 08 October]

<sup>56</sup> Available[Online][https://www.facebook.com/search/str/MZGA+doom/keywords\\_search?filters\\_rp\\_author=%7B%22name%22%3A%22author%22%2C%22args%22%3A%22683649605111508%22%7D](https://www.facebook.com/search/str/MZGA+doom/keywords_search?filters_rp_author=%7B%22name%22%3A%22author%22%2C%22args%22%3A%22683649605111508%22%7D)

<sup>57</sup> The phrase ‘Prophet of Doom’ in the title, was borrowed from the heading of the news interview, Available [Online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWWz7hhstX0>

ingrediencies, I am not in the flesh, I am in the spirit.<sup>58</sup>” In the same interview, the prophet alluded to the fact that he is mentored by prophet Lesego, who is also known for performing strange miracles. Furthermore, EB News Daily South Africa YouTube account displays Prophet Lethebo spraying ‘Doom’ insecticide onto his mouth and the mouth of another volunteer while the congregants make a joyous noise in the background<sup>59</sup>. An article by Roxanne Henderson dated November 21 (2016), published by the Herald live Online recognizes prophet Lethebo Rabalago as a prophet who considers himself as using insect-killing doom to “glorify God,” when praying for followers to obtain their healing. Arguably, sorcery is the use of things such as hair, clothes, food and so forth, to establish contact with the victim for spell casting (Kalu 2008:180). From Kalu’s worldview, the use of dangerous healing practices connotes an impression that is closer to the world of sorcery.

The company that produces the insecticide has cautioned the public by warning against the spraying of ‘Doom’ in contact with skin, eyes and clothing<sup>60</sup>. Furthermore, they encouraged the avoidance of excessive inhalation and food contamination when using ‘Doom’. According to the SABC Digital News; the company that manufactures the ‘Doom’ insecticide; made an effort to make contact with the prophet so as to advise him to desist from making use of ‘Doom’ insecticide when praying for the congregants because of health concerns that were inevitable after excessive usage<sup>61</sup>. Here, there is the need for the church to guard against practices that endanger the lives of the congregants. A step was taken by the CRL Rights Commission condemning the use of dangerous healing practices within faith related contexts. According to the information available on the commission’s official website, Ms. Mkhwanazi-Xaluva was appointed as the chairperson of the CRL Rights Commission from the year 2014 to 2019 duration<sup>62</sup>. Xaluva felt that the Rights of the cultural, religious and linguistic communities have been infringed by the introduction of dangerous healing practices, however a proposal was made for a different legal framework that

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<sup>58</sup> Available [Online] <https://www.enca.com/south-africa/the-doom-prophet> Accessed [2018, March 14]

<sup>59</sup> Available [Online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQF8V5h9f9k> Accessed [Online 2018, March 14]

<sup>60</sup> Available [Online] <http://doom.co.za/products/doom-super-automatic-insect-control-system-refill> Accessed [Online 2018, March 14]

<sup>61</sup> Available [Online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWWz7hhstX0> Accessed [Online 2018, March 14]

<sup>62</sup> Available [Online] <http://www.crlcommission.org.za/leadership.html> Accessed [Online 2018, March 14]



caters for a peer review mechanism that will investigate such practices<sup>63</sup>. There are, however, several examples within Neo-Pentecostal churches perpetuating the use of such healing practices.

### **3.4 Intersection of prosperity and power**

In South Africa, the Christian ideology of “Amandla” signifies the Holy Spirit’s power and authority over all types of demonic oppression (Kalu 2008:264)<sup>64</sup>. Hence, many Neo-Pentecostals believe in exercising power over sickness, disease and poverty. Since healing, prosperity and prophecy is generally the central theme to the Pentecostal faith, examining the experiences that follow the demonstrations of power becomes necessary. Although many newly established Neo-Pentecostal groupings in Southern Africa have controversially misrepresented Pentecostalism, this has not been the case with Classical Pentecostals, who have a more conservative approach when it comes to strange miraculous activities. Nowadays, Neo-Pentecostals have become prominent by retaining many other ingredients in their healing tactics such that dangerous objects are introduced to the healing platform. Most of the “up and coming” healing ministers within Neo-Pentecostal African churches support the engagement of healing objects stating that healing is not limited to the biblical styles, rather, there is a consideration for other alternatives depending on levels of anointing upon the prophet<sup>65</sup>.

Zeroing into the Southern African countries, several prophetic figures who have founded Neo-Pentecostal churches have risen to stardom. Although many Indigenous Neo-Pentecostal leaders have founded churches, some of the prominent ones are foreign nationals who have relocated from their nations of origin to establish churches in other countries<sup>66</sup>. The use of social media platforms and the advancement within the modes of televisual communication systems, has enhanced the spreading of spiritual practices especially for Neo-Pentecostals in Africa.

Despite the favorable socio-political climate of SADC countries, South Africa has also pioneered some of the most dangerous healing practices within the region. South Africa’s Constitution section 15(1), states that “everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief

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<sup>63</sup> Available [Online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PzfWL1LFt6k> Accessed [Online 2018, March 14] Question Time; CRL on the Prophet of Doom [2016, 24 November].

<sup>64</sup> It evokes the extra power and grace through which the Holy Spirit diagnoses, heals and revitalized believers.

<sup>65</sup> Accessed [Online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWWz7hhstX0&t=70s>

<sup>66</sup> Some prophet’s from Ghana from West African countries have migrated to Southern African countries or have provided “spiritual” covering for ministers within the SADC region.

and opinion<sup>67</sup>.” This kind of freedom has, however, been misused to an extent that dangerous practices have infiltrated the religious sector with various implications at stake<sup>68</sup>. Findings by the CRL Commission, which is a constitutional body established regarding the constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1999 and CRL Rights Commission Act no. 19 of 2002, will be referred to in understanding what is going on within Neo-Pentecostal churches<sup>69</sup>.

Certain Pentecostal themes have attracted a great deal of publicity following health and wealth, prophecy and dynamic preaching (Kalu 2008: xiii)<sup>70</sup>. Scrutinizing the dangerous practices introduced to these themes, such activities have prompted difficult questions with regard to the understanding of health, wealth and wellness considering how many other aspects of wellness have been compromised. Areas that relate to public funds, the use of power, sex scandals and the socio-psychological or physical abuse will be analyzed.

### **3.5 Possible implications associated with dangerous healing practices**

When a congregant is sprayed with ‘Doom’ and does not recover, what is the coping mechanism for the victim, and how does the community view the person? Generally, lack of physical health has been understood as symptomatic, that is, a result of lacking spiritual, emotional or moral health (Kalu 2008:265). Failure to recover may, therefore, result in the congregant suffering from sociological or psychological traumas due to the implication associated with exposure to such practices. The style of “freedom in the spirit” that accompanies Pentecostalism has contributed to the acceptance of Pentecostal groupings in many different contexts (Anderson 2009:646). As it were, there is a major debate within Pentecostalism on whether to classify newly established churches under the Pentecostal bracket or under cultic groups. Perhaps, insiders fear the contamination of the Pentecostal faith. The contested area within Neo-Pentecostal pneumatology is the symbolic use of harmful objects and creatures when conducting healing and deliverance, seeing that the modes of transmitting the spiritual power have become very controversial especially amongst popular prophets. Here, the Pentecostal point of contention is not whether the Holy Spirit

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<sup>67</sup> CRL Rights Commission, 2017 Report. [Online] Available: [www.crlcommission.org.za](http://www.crlcommission.org.za) [2017, 04 April]

<sup>68</sup> Sexual, physical, psychological and material implications have accompanied dangerous healing activities

<sup>69</sup> “However, the Commission does not say the state must interfere in the religious affairs of any religion, instead the recommendations encourage self-regulation, rather than state regulation” (p27). CRL Rights Commission, 2017 Report. Accessed [ 2018, April 04]

<sup>70</sup> Desperate subjects have been found jittery and wanting more.

can perform many things, but that there are other spirits in the universe that are not wholesome from a biblical Perspective (Kalu 2008:79)<sup>71</sup>. This section outlines the physical, financial, sexual, sociological and holistic health implications through discussion and analysis of some of these practices.

### 3.5.1 Physical implications

Physical implications in this section refer to those activities that can harm, injure or bring hurt to the human body. Since human physique is included in the definition of health and wellbeing, dangerous healing practices that may result in bodily harm ought to be examined. Currently, social media platforms such as Youtube and Facebook handles have popularized many upcoming ministers and End Times Disciples Ministries have not been an exception because their Facebook handle has exposed dangerous healing practices conducted by prophet Mnguni<sup>72</sup>. Within South Africa, Mnguni has been popularly known as the ‘snake pastor.’ The so-called act of demonstrating power displayed by Prophet Mnguni, is the act of riding on a congregant as one would ride a horse. Images displayed on their Facebook handle shows prophet Mnguni riding on top of a congregant who is in a bended posture<sup>73</sup>. Such a practice not only affects the way people perceive healing and deliverance, but also brings shame to the victims before families and friends. Year 2015 and 2016 for the End Times Disciples Ministries brought more controversial flavor to Neo-Pentecostal African churches. In a Facebook post by the End Time Disciples Ministries, an image is posted in which the prophet is jumping on congregants<sup>74</sup>. The ministry made a comment stating, “total demonstration of God's power, no pain felt in them, meaning God is with to God be the glory.” An article published online by South African News24, reported the return of Prophet Peniel Mnguni with a display of driving through a board placed on top of two congregants in the presence of his followers<sup>75</sup>. As a result, the church tent was reported as being burnt by furious residents who were astonished by the indecency and indignity displayed by the prophet towards his congregants.

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<sup>71</sup> Having the bible suggesting that all spirits must be tested; some miracles may not be authored by the Holy Christ.

<sup>72</sup> [Online] Available: <https://www.facebook.com/End-Times-Disciples-Ministries-351175848381100/> [2017, 04 October].

<sup>73</sup> [Online] Available: End Times Disciples Ministries Facebook Page Images. [ 2015, July 13].

<sup>74</sup> [Online] Available: End Times Disciples Ministries Facebook Page Images. [ 2015, May 21].

<sup>75</sup> [Online] Available: <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/snake-pastor-shows-power-by-driving-over-2-congregants-20160608> [2017, 14 Oct].

### 3.5.2 Financial implications

Resource capacity often determines what a church can achieve and boosts identity on public profiles and its growth potential. Most churches, therefore, engage in quite a number of strategies to boost financial coffers, but in the process, some aggressive and innovative fund-raising tactics have been introduced that differ from the traditional understanding of church fund raising founded in older denominations (Kalu 2008:141).

Amongst the key substantive issues discovered by the CRL Rights commission is the deliberate exploitation of poor and vulnerable people because of the commercialization of religious practices, through assumption of divine/missionary right to directly or indirectly soliciting and receiving gifts/offerings/tithes in cash or in kind from the congregation<sup>76</sup>. One of the major issues that has been contested with regard to Neo-Pentecostal churches relates to financial issues. Controversial news articles and headlines written about pastors involving money and sex scandals have been on a rise over the past few years resulting in some parts of the community questioning whether religion has become commercialized, enriching only a few individuals<sup>77</sup>. Fraudulent behavior by the so called “Men of God” and the use of personal bank accounts for banking public funds, had been suspected by the CRL Rights Commission when they decided to undertake investigations upon certain ministries. One of the popular, yet controversial, declarations that has stormed Neo-Pentecostal African churches is the miracle money practice, where congregants are instructed to check their bank account notifications for any financial transfers that may reflect from the declaration<sup>78</sup>. From an observational point of view within Neo-Pentecostal African churches, prophecy is considered a locus for divine instruction. However, congregants presume anything spoken by these prophets is given as a directive from God, while in some cases, some prophets are using prophetic gifts for their own profit. Such dangerous claims have serious implications on impoverished communities.

Furthermore, in the Eastern Cape Province, a grouping dubbed the Seven Angels church has been reported to have encouraged people not to go to work, although it later emerged that congregants were seemingly suspected to have been taken hostage<sup>79</sup>. This practice undermines empowerment

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<sup>76</sup> [Online] CRL Rights Commission, 2017 Report. Accessed [2018, April 04] (page 19)

<sup>77</sup> [Online] CRL Rights Commission, 2017 Report. Accessed [2018, April 04] p04

<sup>78</sup> [Online] Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZaolw6cPL8> [2017, 01 Nov]

<sup>79</sup> [Online] Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B14CMeawgf0> [2018, 10 April]

strategies that encourage sustainable livelihood amongst congregants. It seems as if pastors and prophets who engage in these practices, are only seeking financial gain, fame or controlling power. Amongst the challenges that the CRL Rights commission encountered during their interrogation process is the refusal of the churches to submit required documents that authenticates the churches operations. Documents that were required included financial statements, annual general minutes, constitution, code of conduct, faith statements, bank account signatories, deeds or leases of the land from where churches operated<sup>80</sup>.

According to the findings reported by the CRL Rights Commission, there is substantial evidence of commercialization of religion such that people are expected to pay some monies before blessings and prayers are pronounced over them (Mkhwanazi-Xaluva, 2016:25). Others were reported to have received the so called ‘blessed water’ at a fee. Sometimes, access to meet one on one with the ‘spiritual’ father has a financial cost attached to it. In addition, wrist bands, towels and olive oils are sold to the congregants for attaining favor<sup>81</sup>. Kalu (2008:66) points out that some Pentecostal preachers have been accused of merchandising the gospel and being veritable wolves in sheep’s clothing. This has attracted a great number of imposters who are after the material gains at the expense of those who are less privileged yet desperate for healing and prosperity. These individuals care less about discipleship, which is the core of God’s mission because of the introduction of a consultation fee for a one-to-one encounter with the man of God.

The Neo-Pentecostal African church planting pattern has revealed urban centers to be lucrative environments for young pastors. A great influx of young prophets tends to flock into urban centers because many churches face financial challenges (Kalu 2008:05). As a result, Neo-Pentecostal churches are fewer in rural areas simply because many churches that have been established within poorer economic regions are known to be smaller and undergo financial challenges. Many Neo-Pentecostal churches emphasize the need for a ‘prophetic seed’ to attain a miracle<sup>82</sup>. These churches have also gained popularity because of the wealth-related testimonies that are published on most of their social media platforms.

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<sup>80</sup> CRL Rights Commission, 2017 Report. [Online] Available: [www.crlcommission.org.za](http://www.crlcommission.org.za) [2018, 04 April]

<sup>81</sup> CRL Rights Commission, 2017 Report. (p31) [Online] Available: [www.crlcommission.org.za](http://www.crlcommission.org.za) [2018, 04 April]

<sup>82</sup> A prophetic seed refers to money given to a prophet, sometimes as a prerequisite for a miracle, prophetic utterance or pronouncement of blessings.

As people are eager to know the future-outlook of their lives, they become vulnerable to a person who claims to have knowledge into future realities, hence, the demand for prophetic direction has opened a door for a consultation fee in some Neo-Pentecostal African settings. Another accepted belief that has propounded the prosperity of a prophet is the concept of ‘spiritual fatherhood’ concurring with a complementary ‘doctrine of sonship’. There are extreme tendencies with regard to how it has been disseminated into the congregants, as sons and daughters seem to pay their way into favor and close proximity to the so-called man of God. The connection between money and the gift of prophecy is a grey area precisely because it could encourage the introduction of fake prophets (Kalu 2008:143). Much loyalty has also been demanded of congregants’ relationship with the prophet, so that through fear of curses, no one questions abusive tendencies, and in most cases, some illegal happenings have been kept under the pews without any interrogation. Furthermore, material prosperity packaged as “the” gospel has become one of the main highlights of their preaching, with much emphasis placed on the need for deliverance, such that it is considered a prerequisite for one to assume a life of experiencing prosperity. A question can then be posed: Is there a non-coercive way of dealing with the poor without manipulating their hope? It is also important to note that in few reported cases (as compared to the silent ones), many crooks who have masqueraded as prophets have been accused of various cases such as sexual assaults, embezzlement of funds and witchcraft. This study acknowledges that not all Neo-Pentecostal leaders in African churches are prosperity preachers, as some of them, actually train congregants in self-help seminars for wealth creation, skill acquisition and education (Kalu 2008:143).

### **3.5.3 Sexual Implications**

Within most Neo-Pentecostal African Churches and the various churches all over the world, many reports have been made implicating the man of God’s involvement in sex scandals with female congregants. Even though women and children make the most of victims, also, some men have equally fallen victim to petrol drinking, grass eating and sexual assaults. One of the controversial events that took place in North Pretoria, Soshanguve, is a service where some congregants from the End Time Disciples Ministries stripped in church because they were allegedly reported to have felt too hot during the church service<sup>83</sup>. When indecent exposure of bodies is considered a divine

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<sup>83</sup>[Online] Available: <https://citizen.co.za/news/387857/pastor-makes-congregation-strip/> [2018, 10 April]

act of God at the expense of violating social norms, dangerous healing practices with sexual implications become problematic.

An astonishing example involves the controversial Prophet Paseka Motsoeneng, who is popularly known as ‘Prophet Mboro’<sup>84</sup>. Although Mboro is a Shona noun translated as ‘penis,’ prophet Mboro disputes the meaning of his name saying that Mboro is a Sotho noun ‘moporofeta’<sup>85</sup>. One of the scandals that involved prophet Mboro is when he prayed for a couple, who had sexual challenges in their relationship.’ The clip posted on the YouTube social media platform shows a mature couple sitting on a bed and Prophet Mboro commanding the man to test the genital that was prayed for while he was examining the erection miracle<sup>86</sup>. Generally, many people do not publicize their sex life and activity except for other motives or professions, thus, for a prophet to conduct a “poking miracle” on a video, can be deemed as a dehumanizing act.

Furthermore, in Rustenburg South Africa, another dangerous healing practice that went viral on social media platforms is one act of deliverance that involved the man of God having to kiss a female congregant during the so-called prophetic and healing session. This dangerous activity happened at Kingdom Prayer Ministry led by prophet Nana Poku who is believed to have migrated from Ghana into South Africa. In a clip posted on You Tube, Prophet Nana performs a kissing stance during a deliverance session<sup>87</sup>. This sparked a controversy with regard to the understanding of healing within Neo-Pentecostal African churches. As it were, many African Neo-Pentecostal followers are depending on prophets for direction in life, although the teachings from many of these so-called prophets often differ from biblical teachings in so many doctrinal ways. There is, therefore, a need to guard against abusive tendencies in churches.

Another Neo-Pentecostal leader, who is suspected to have been sexually assaulting many girls in his custody is prophet Tim Omotoso<sup>88</sup>. In a testimonial presented to the court by Neliswa and Anele Mxakaza, the two young girls confessed that they were pushed to please the “man of God” and lived a life of threats and fear<sup>89</sup>. They further confessed to knowing about abusive tendencies

<sup>84</sup> [Online] Available: <https://www.news24.com/Drum/Archive/at-home-with-pastor-mboro-20170728> [2018, 23 March]

<sup>85</sup> It can be disputed why his name and ministerial salutation bear the same meaning - ‘Prophet - Moporofeta’

<sup>86</sup> Available [Online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwVP2NAumE0> Accessed [Online 2018, March 23]

<sup>87</sup> Available [Online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wiMnMQfac0> Accessed [Online 2018, March 23]

<sup>88</sup> Prophet Tim Omotoso is the founder and president of Jesus Dominion Ministries

<sup>89</sup> [Online] Available: <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/we-were-forced-to-please-him-idols-sa-twins-on-pastor-tim-omotoso-20180130>. [2018, 20 Nov].



and sexual assaults that happened to other girls. These and other allegations against Prophet Tim Omotoso have seen him being taken into police custody awaiting proper investigations into those allegations.

Dangerous healing practices are not only a South Africa phenomenon - other neighboring countries have also seen certain individuals who rose to stardom because of controversial healing tactics. In Zimbabwe, there was an article in the Newsday online newspaper by Phyllis Mbanje on the dangerous healing practices conducted by a Zimbabwean pastor, Paul Sanyangore. The article states that the 'Man of God' was indulging in the act of praying for 'anointed condoms.' The act of praying for condoms to be anointed or anointing condoms would only mislead and misinform the public, as concerned citizens would contend.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, the article highlights the complains that were brought forward by the Condomise Campaign, which was held at the International Conference on Aids and STIs in Africa, where the campaign organizers, mostly young people, felt that the activity was retrogressive in combating HIV and AIDS. The article goes on to mention sentiments from the United Nations Population Fund senior HIV technical advisor Bidia Deperthes who warned, "Please stop praying for the condoms, it misinforms the public and its totally against science." Pastor Sanyangore is, however, reported to have defended his actions by stating that condoms were only physical, but he takes a step further where he addresses the spiritual side.

### **3.5.4 Health Implications**

In the SADC, many dangerous healing practices bear serious health implications and serious reparations that would result in one seeking medical attention. In South Africa, the CRL Rights Commission conducted a survey on the growth of indigenous gatherings and found that religious institutions and traditional healing practices have mushroomed throughout South Africa. This growth has led to a culture of streets signs and advertisements with promises of miracles, ranging from healing to prosperity<sup>91</sup>. Such advertisements and street signs have lured many gullible families, who have been exposed to various diseases into stampeding for the promised miracles.

Various models of conducting healing within Neo-Pentecostal African churches have been exposed on the social media platforms. One unique example is where Prophet Mnguni fed a female

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<sup>90</sup> [Online] Available: <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2015/12/pastor-defends-anointed-condoms/> [2018, 26 March]

<sup>91</sup> CRL Rights Commission, 2017 Report. [Online] Available: [www.crlcommission.org.za](http://www.crlcommission.org.za) Accessed [2017, 04 April]



congregant a piece of cloth, hair weave extensions and poisoners flowers<sup>92</sup>. Prophet Penuel Mnguni, is the leader and general overseer of End Time Disciples Ministry, which is a ministry in South Africa, based in Soshanguve<sup>93</sup>. Although eating is a regular exercise for living organisms, not everything is suitable for oral consumption - cloths, needles and poisonous flowers are not the usual victuals for humanity. In the church context, therefore, unconventional methods of demonstrating God's power are condemned for various health reasons besides the undignified expression of Christianity which has been displayed. Such unconventional ways of demonstrating God's power have been popularized within Neo-Pentecostal churches when compared to their Classical counterparts who prefer a conservative approach.

One of the major controversial acts conducted by prophet Penuel Mnguni was the act of feeding a snake to congregants as a miraculous exercise. The End Times Disciples Ministries Facebook handle posted a comment explaining what transpired during the demonstration of power; "Man of God declared a snake to become a chocolate (Chomp<sup>94</sup>) and the congregation ate it. We have authority to change everything into anything and it will obey because of our authority<sup>95</sup>." Images accompanying the post show an object that looks like a snake being fed to two congregants. Commenting on the snake eating miracle, another post on their Facebook handle states, "Those with small faith eats only vegetables but the ones with a great faith eats everything." With such defense to the practice, they are relegating snake eating activities to be a result of great faith. Within Christian circles, the activity has left many baffled as to what extent the church is willing to go to demonstrate power. Notwithstanding the healing phenomenon, within South African communities, snakes are well known to be objects of witchcraft and considered extremely poisonous creatures.

Another example is of Rabboni Centre Ministries that is led by prophet Lesego Daniel. Rabboni Centre Ministries YouTube handle has a video clip of their church services. One of the sessions reveals an event where a volunteer congregant drinks a substance that was claimed to be petrol, which was later claimed to have turned into apple juice<sup>96</sup>. The disclaimer on the video clip states; "the level of the anointing is not the same, if you cannot turn water into wine, please do not try

<sup>92</sup> [Online] Available: End Times Disciples Ministries Facebook Page Images [2015, 13 July]

<sup>93</sup>[Online] Available: <https://citizen.co.za/news/387857/pastor-makes-congregation-strip/> [2018, 10 April]

<sup>94</sup> A popular type of South African chocolate

<sup>95</sup> End Times Disciples Ministries Facebook Page Images [2015, 13 July]

<sup>96</sup> [Online] Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2XkzZvbJCg> [2018, 03 June]

this.” The Rabboni Centre Ministries commented on the events screened on the video clip to have happened on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2014, where Lesego Daniel prayed for a bottle that was alleged to have contained petrol to be later turned into apple juice. Another disturbing video clip released online by Rabboni Ministries shows some congregants indulging in eating grass as one would eat victuals<sup>97</sup>. The Rabboni Centre Ministries YouTube channel commented on the event by stating that; “the Man of God Lesego Daniel demonstrating the power which was spoken of in the book of Mark chapter 16 - they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all.” Kalu (2008:263) disputes these kinds of churches’ understanding of what healing ought to be, because some churches have even gone further to disregard consultation with any modern medical institution.

Another service conducted by Prophet Lesego Daniel, published by Rabboni Centre Ministries on their YouTube handle, shows people gleaned leaves from a tree and eating them<sup>98</sup>. A comment made on the channel states that; “Jesus Christ turned water which was used for ceremonial washing into wine; this was not clean but unclean water meaning that this water was not intended for drinking, but Jesus Christ in His glory turned what could not be consumed to what could be consumed.” These events have commenced a new era in Neo-Pentecostal African churches understanding of healing. The introduction of dangerous healing practices has brought about many questions regarding the healing phenomenon displayed within Neo-Pentecostalism. Concerned citizens and nations have often questioned the kind of power that is at work within these churches. Some have concluded that the works of the, ‘false prophets’ have now surfaced<sup>99</sup>. The African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), led by Rev Kenneth Meshoe, has condemned the dangerous healing practices such as stripping in church, drinking petrol, and the act of consuming snakes as means to attain healing or glorifying God<sup>100</sup>. Meshoe calls on all mature and trained ministers of the gospel, to reprimand rogue individuals who are making a mockery of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### 3.5.5 Sociological Implications

An example according to Kalu (2008:29), took place in seventeenth century Kongo, Kimpa Vita started as a *n’anga*, traditional diviner, a member of the Marinda secret cult, who made claims of

<sup>97</sup> [Online] Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jp7BkKbsbwE> [2017, 05 Nov]

<sup>98</sup> [Online] Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lc1DzwgVNjA> [2017, 05 Nov]

<sup>99</sup> Matthew 24:11. In the last days many false prophets shall arise (KJV)

<sup>100</sup> [Online] Available: <https://www.enca.com/south-africa/acdp-blast-snake-eating-church> [2017, 18 October]

being possessed by a Christian patron saint, St Anthony, yet was perceived as a Christian prophetess, although her messianic claims led to her termination by the authorities who regarded her as a witch. We have many in church today who are making similar claims yet without proper religious accreditation or recognition. The Neo-Pentecostal spiritual beliefs have sparked controversy with regard to the introduction of dangerous healing practices<sup>101</sup>.

One of the controversial churches that has raised serious concerns among South African communities is the Seven Angels church. One extreme issue that the CRL Rights Commission has dealt with is one example by a Ministry based in the Eastern Cape which comprised of seven representatives who allegedly consider themselves as angelic beings who have been sent to earth as custodians of the divine. One of their leaders claimed that, “Lucifer came to this world and breathed on the South African Constitution and schools, we are saying education is wrong because Satan has taken over the schools; we are saying people should not listen to the constitution because Satan drives it and people must stop working.”<sup>102</sup> Another substantive issue raised by the CRL Rights Commission relates to hegemonic tendencies or “personality cult,” which is displayed in most of these settings, where some prophets instigate deification and hero-worship from the church members<sup>103</sup>. This has led members, who are subjects to these leaders, being controlled by extremists/fundamentalists who forbid children from acquiring basic education or to use of banking institutions but should keep money in home reserves.

Furthermore, the leader of Victory World International Church, Paul Sanyangore dominated the social media platform with his stance of holding a cellphone to the ear and clamoring to be in conversation with God on the phone. A video posted on YouTube handle exposes the conversation that is presumed as communication with God while pacing on the isle of the church ministering to a woman who was confirming utterances made by Sanyangore<sup>104</sup>. McKim’s (2014:254) simple definition of a Prophet refers to someone who speaks on behalf of God to God’s people<sup>105</sup>. Elemental signs of trickery are, however, toeing closer to the pulpit for sinister motives. As Goldingay (2001:46) argues, a prophet is likely to fall or to make mistakes, which means, there

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<sup>101</sup> Pentecostal theology refers to the symbolic cosmos of the Pentecostal movement, which can be articulated not through formal treatises but in the songs and prayers, sermons and testimonies (Cox 2001: 201)

<sup>102</sup> [Online] CRL Rights Commission, 2017 Report. Accessed [2018, 04 April] Page (21)

<sup>103</sup> [Online] CRL Rights Commission, 2017 Report. Accessed [2018, 04 April] (Page 20)

<sup>104</sup> [Online] Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytgG309D5RU&t=59s> [2018, 26 March]

<sup>105</sup> (Heb.nabi’, Gr. prophetes) most prominently the Hebrew prophets whose writings are found in the OT.

are some other prophets who have fallen into error within Neo-Pentecostal African churches. The stance by prophet Sanyangore may be seen as symbolical prophetic acts but can be disputed as blasphemous claims. Here, the negative impression sold out to the public discredits the act as malicious and tarnishes the Christian perspective on prophecy.

### **3.6 Possible factors leading to the perpetuation and acceptance of dangerous healing practices**

The tendency to spiritualize everything, and the neglect of the immediate social engagement or contribution has become a common trend (Nkurunziza 2013:59). There is, therefore, a need to take steps towards transforming communities. According to Kalu (2008:263), the popularity of divine healings in Africa arises from the presence of poverty within communities that are plagued by collapsed health care delivery systems. This means that those who are poor and facing financial challenges may not be able to afford medication or medical bills, thus, despondency leads them to resort to anything that promises recovery. Here, the appearance of anyone who claims to be a religious specialist or the “Man of God” who claims to have power to heal the sick and ward off evil spirits and sorcery, automatically becomes the main attraction to people who cannot afford decent medical treatment (Anderson 2009:644). In such cases, when an individual becomes an emblem of hope, people tend to surrender their will and possessions seeking favor with such a powerful figure. However, when spiritual authority is not only vested in the scriptures but emanating from individuals, the bible can be quoted to undergird male control, sexual abuse and embezzlement of funds, bringing tension between what scripture says and what the ‘spirit’ says (Cox 2001:196).

In attempting to respond to the research question, there are several factors that have arisen in the analysis of what perpetuates dangerous healing practices. These factors have possibly led to the acceptance and introduction of dangerous healing practices within the African Neo-Pentecostal world of the miraculous. Amongst other possible factors leading to the acceptance and perpetuation of dangerous healing practices, there are four key factors that found interest in this study such as the spiritual fatherhood and son ship notion, socio-economic vulnerability and life crisis, untrained leaders and experiential theology.

### **3.7.1 The notion of “spiritual fatherhood and son ship”**

The spiritual father and son phenomenon that has dominated Neo-Pentecostal African churches, has been an ideal platform for abuse and domination. According to Kalu (2008:124), the spiritual fatherhood phenomenon is referring to a situation where leaders encourage members to refer to their spiritual leaders as “fathers in the Lord,” conveying warming images of intimacy drawn from a family setting but used to encrust patriarchal and gerontocratic authority patterns. It seems as if the use of power within such relationships is domination and subjectivity, where in some cases, members may undergo abusive practices and resort to silence because of fear and/or loyalty to the “man of God”. According to Kalu (2008:161), loyalist theology is very vigorous in amongst most Pentecostals. When a single prophet is entitled to supreme authority as one man, there can be the possibility of patriarchal dominance. Dismantling fear within congregants has become a mammoth task since many prophets have secured their empires with teachings and testimonies that promote intimidation more than enhancing faith<sup>106</sup>. When commenting about Pentecostal healers, Kalu (2008:264) states that some Pentecostal healers indulge in self-salvation and they parade the illusion of control over evil, thereby usurping the role of God. Seemingly, Neo-Pentecostal spirituality is not fully addressing the social abnormalities but is more of a survival strategy for both the prophet and the victim, rather than a strategy to end victimization and domination (Anderson 1992:35). In addition, when healing is built around the person of ‘the prophet’ and the cure does not happen or people relapse, spiritual and credibility crises follow (Kalu 2008:265). Thus, some may go to the extent of fabricating miracles so as to maintain or protect the image of the prophet. These self-acclaimed prophets take advantage of a sick person; giving them a platform to rise to stardom through the display of a controversial gimmick that brings them desired attention at the expense of downgrading the Pentecostal integrity and image.

### **3.7.2 Socio-economic vulnerability and life Crises**

The CDE report noted that the recruitment of crowds into Neo-Pentecostal African churches is often precipitated by life challenges, illnesses and divine healing, hence, healing and prophetic utterances are major attractions (2008a:20). Appetite driven congregants have fallen victims to greedy prophets who pretend to have discovered the panacea to life’s challenges. The

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<sup>106</sup> This is whereby you’ll find some people testifying about the consequences they faced when they opposed the Man of God.

commercialization of olive oil (anointing oil) and other local symbols, heighten the possibility of manipulation and emotional control in the healing process (Kalu 2008:263). The CDE report noted that poorer congregants often feel overwhelmed by the extent of which societal moral values have decayed and the stigma attached to those suffering from HIV/AIDS (2008a:16). The report further states that, in black townships, many people express dissatisfaction over the quality of governance and service delivery (2008b:63). At grassroots level, the contribution of the Neo-Pentecostals in the endeavor to combat poverty has been very minimal as megachurch infrastructures are often surrounded by steel shacks, where congregants find residence.

### **3.7.3 Untrained Leaders**

Private inspiration and authority seem to be endangering the religious community. Here, a problematic factor is governance considering that Neo-Pentecostal churches are generally led by a young prophet, who is endowed with good preaching and motivational skills (Anderson 1992:65). The assumption here is that the spiritual gift equals greater spiritual maturity, even though in most cases, the opposite is true. In the attempt to discover the reasons why many Neo-Pentecostal preachers lack proper accreditation from reputable theological seminaries, Kalu (2008:127) states that, many “up and coming” prophets, who would start their own churches without formal training, are those who are confident of a spiritual experience and a divine call. This suggests that, a divine calling replaces accreditation or rather, experience supersedes theological training.

### **3.7.4 Experiential theology**

Cox (2001:314) disapproves the authoritative use of experience from the understanding that although Christian theologians have acknowledged the role of experience, it has not been included as one of the authoritative bases for religion and theology. The experiential branch of Pentecostalism finds its strength in the practical results in terms of practices such as healing, although the ways in which these results are attained remains questionable<sup>107</sup>. Experience can, therefore, be argued disputed when it is used as the core hermeneutical standard to validate a dangerous practice<sup>108</sup>. As it were, when the Holy Spirit is considered as a quasi-magical power used to attain wealth and the effectiveness of the preaching determined by the physical results

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<sup>107</sup> Understanding the dynamics of experience; experience is an end-result, hence, finding the genesis of an experience helps us understand and identify the influence or otherwise, the motive.

<sup>108</sup> The bible has remained normative for informing Christian doctrines.

attained; Neo-Pentecostals in Africa risk losing the true essence of the gospel (Anderson 2009:644).

Although Pentecostals usually emphasize the importance of experience, there ought to be a finer understanding of the meaning of the term, otherwise it becomes “a vacuous ‘cult of experience,’ too much in keeping with celebration of ‘feelings’ and the endless search for new sources of arousal and exhilaration, could undermine its authenticity” (Cox 2001:313). Healings taking place and recovery being testified in a Christian way, does not necessarily make the biblical God the accredited source. Cox (2001:313) notes that anyone can claim anything in the name of experience and results are often exciting but confusing. Unruly desires for overnight success and healing have led astray many Neo-Pentecostal prophets into succumbing to public pressure by which the mob demands miracles. Hence, some Neo-Pentecostals in Africa and AIC’s leaders have resorted to occult means to meet the popular demand for greater manifestations (Kalu 2008:77). The quest and thirst for power has led to the introduction of demonic powers resulting in the establishment of many cultic sects. Neo-Pentecostals ought to strive to maintain a balance between experience and doctrine so that Christianity as a religion, will not lose the fundamental truths that hold together the Christian identity and belonging. It is quite dangerous for prophets to formulate a complete theological claim based on experience because experience is bound to change over time. One’s experience may differ with the other, based on location, time and race. Although internal Neo-Pentecostal conflicts continue over experiential theology, there is need for scholars to play a role against abusive tendencies.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has analyzed what is going on within Neo-Pentecostal African Churches with regard to the ‘prophet of doom’ and dangerous healing practices. The influences emanating from the way Africans understand and respond to spirituality may have a bearing on how religious leaders deal with issues within an African context. Some have gone to the extent of using harmful substances when dealing with social ailments and illnesses. Within NPCs, there emerged a new breed of prophets who have become popular by using dangerous healing practices within the South African context. One of the controversial prophetic figures has been dubbed the ‘prophet of Doom’ because he used ‘Doom’ insecticide on congregants as a healing technique. This chapter has explored the physical, financial, sexual, health and sociological implications associated with dangerous healing

practices as well as the factors that perpetuate such practices. Issues of spiritual fatherhood and socio-economic challenges have been identified as primary factors leading to the acceptance and perpetuation of dangerous healing practices by religious leaders on their followers. The next chapter looks at the theological aspects of healing and power in relation to what should be going on within the Pentecostal healing heritage.



## CHAPTER 4

### HEALING AND POWER FROM A CLASSICAL PENTECOSTAL VIEW

#### 4.1 Introduction

Dealing with matters related to sickness and the desire to develop healthy living standards has become a trend all over the world as humanity thrives for the wellbeing of the total person. Medical institutions and fraternities, healthy foodstuffs and bodily exercises have become beacons of hope to those desiring to lead a healthy life. The church, as a universal body, plays a significant role when it comes to issues related to the wellbeing of the total person. The previous chapter has explored ‘what is going on’ within Neo-Pentecostal African churches within the Southern region of Africa with regard to dangerous healing practices and the ‘Doom’ prophet who sprayed insecticide on congregants as a healing practice. Also, the chapter has analyzed possible factors leading to the acceptance and perpetuation of such practices by religious leaders on their followers.

This chapter discusses healing and power using Osmer’s normative task (Osmer 2005: xv, 2008:04). The chapter begins with a theological overview of healing and power in both the Old and New Testament followed by a Classical Pentecostal reflection on what should be going on within Pentecostalism with regard to healing and power. A Classical Pentecostal theology on healing and power is chosen as the normative in addressing such dangerous healing practices as many of those engaging in these practices identify as ‘Pentecostal’, yet their practices fall outside of what is largely accepted within Pentecostalism. The chapter will further provide a global historical account of Classical Pentecostals, who strongly believed in the atonement provision of healing, and how Pentecostalism got established within the SADC region of Africa.

The traditional way of the laying hands on the sick person and alternative healing dynamics will be further analyzed. The use of scripture as normative and the laying on of hands on the sick as a gesture of faith within Classical Pentecostal understanding of healing will be appreciated in contrast to the Neo-Pentecostal use of dangerous healing practices. This chapter merely highlights the Pentecostal historical account but is in no way exhaustive as it seeks to bring a corrective lens to the Pentecostal understanding of healing.

## 4.2 Theological overview of healing

In Christianity, Pentecostalism is one of the fastest growing movements. Pentecostals are considered to have revived the healing practice as well as offering vibrant and colorful services without a written order (Martin 2002:142; Cox 2001:120). The relationship between sickness and health has been a subject of interest especially with regard to finding antidotes. Kalu (2010:214) states that sickness includes more than physical illness and healing is greater than curing, thus, when sickness can be interpreted as multifaceted, then healing ceases to be only a physical issue. Kalu's (2008:263) understanding of the word "health" and "salvation" has the same Greek word '*soteria*', which sees healing/s as encompassing various elements of a balanced livelihood. In theology, this soteriological link embraces various forms of healing from the OT to the NT perspectives of God as savior, deliverer and healer. Horn (1989:31) stated the soteriological link between healing and salvation seems to grant no room for gradual healing. An understanding derived from a view that understands salvation as instantaneous. Thus, it is important to analyze how the biblical text deals with the concept of healing from the Old and New Testament. Furthermore, since healing is a widespread phenomenon, it can be addressed from various disciplines of scholarship, cultures and contexts. In religion, theology has been core-centered on biblical texts, although interpretations and application of the same text may vary.

### 4.2.1 Old Testament perspective

"For I am the Lord that heals you" in book of Exodus 15:26, is key in understanding healing in the OT (Gaiser 2010:21). Here, God introduces Himself as, "*Jehovah Rapha*" to the children of Israel which gave them assurance of finding healing every time they return to God. Healing in the Old Testament can be referred to as a gift from God, who announced to Israel: "I am the Lord your healer" (Gaiser 2010:246). The scripture in Exodus 15:26 suggests a conditional provision of health, especially in relation to obedience. As it were, there are two aspects of healing in the OT: obedience to God's law meant freedom from disease, whilst disobedience means liability to disease (Wilkinson 1988:05). This meant that righteousness is fundamental to the understanding of health in the OT (Wilkinson 1988:06). To an extent, this understanding of healing in the OT has influenced the 'healing in the atonement' view embraced by the Classical Pentecostals. Furthermore, the Hebrew word '*shalom*' in the OT expresses the fullness and wellbeing of life (Wilkinson 1988:04). The word '*shalom*' is referred to as the word 'peace, which does not only refer to the absence of war, but rather to wholeness or completeness (Wilkinson 1988:05). Thus,

on another note, the OT concept of health is basically a state of fulfillment, of a human being's experiencing wholeness. Wilkinson notes that there are three aspects to this: its ethical aspect that consists of obedience to the law (scriptural); the spiritual aspect consisting of righteousness; and, the physical which is manifested by strength and long life (Wilkinson 1988:04). The OT expression of long life in Gen15:15 was promised to Abraham. (Gen 15:15; Wilkinson 1988:07). Wilkinson (1988:7) defines health in the OT as wholeness (in personality and being) and holiness that comes through obedience to the law of God.

Additionally, there are forms of healing in the OT that were symbolic in nature and where objects were introduced to the healing activity. The Moses account is one such example: God instructed Moses to hang a snake on a pole; anyone bitten can look at the snake and live. This scripture, to some extent, when literally interpreted, has the possibility of bringing confusion and danger into the Pentecostal movement. Gaiser (2010:40-41), in his narration of Moses making a bronze serpent drew a definition from a magic theory which states; it's a logical system-based on similarity and analogy that resonates similarity between two identical things, names or insinuations. This definition indicates that, when praying for rain, people should use pour water on the ground resembling the desired outcome, thus, relating such a definition to the understanding of dangerous healing practices. 'Doom' is known as an insecticide, with the ability to kill insects, therefore it can destroy bacteria in the body. There seems to be a pattern that shows logical deduction or inference of some biblical texts as bearing literal meaning. Furthermore, Gaiser (2010:41) defines magic as "manipulating power by using the right symbols and formulas," chosen by humankind to illustrate a motive or intent. It should, however, be noted that the snake formula was not harnessed by Moses, but by God (Gaiser 2010:41). The story of the bronze serpent is, therefore, not a story of illusions or dubious tricks - it is a story of faith in God and grace towards His people. It is not a story of a controlling God, but a genuine fellowship with the deity (Gaiser 2010:41). Not all biblical healing metaphors, therefore, bear an instructive literal application; "as Moses lifted up the bronze snake in the wilderness", the implication is that Jesus Christ must be lifted (John 3:14). The Old Testament account whereby there was a plague of serpents, but the Lord instructed Moses to make a brazen symbol of a serpent (Num 21:8-13). The meaning is directed at Christ as the focal point in healing, but not the symbol used as explained in the book of John 3:14. In analyzing the relationship between healing and 'Doom', if healing can be administered without making use of

any symbol, therefore the necessity of using symbols in healing can be dismissed by the Exodus 15:26 understanding, which states, “I am the Lord that heals you.”

#### **4.2 2 New Testament perspective**

Various definitions of health are used in the New Testament, such as: life, blessedness, holiness and maturity (Wilkinson 1988:13). Similarly, several words are used to describe healing or health: ‘*hugies*’ meaning having quality of soundness; ‘*eirene*’ which describes a state of peace or rest as opposed to a state of war or disturbance; ‘*zoe*’ which is interpreted as life; ‘*teleios*’ which describes that which is mature or translated ‘perfect’ in English versions; ‘*soteria*’ which is derived from ‘*sos*’ which means safe and sound but most commonly understood as health or deliverance to a safe place or wellbeing (Wilkinson 1988:09). Furthermore, Wilkinson (1988:287) sees the book of James as describing the healing process with rich restorative words such as ‘*sozo*’ which means to save, ‘*egerin*’ meaning to raise and ‘*iaomai*’ which means to heal. For Wilkinson (1988:09), health is understood in terms of soundness, wholeness, soundness, life, strength and salvation. Unlike the Old Testament; when understanding healing the New Testament, healing should be understood as found in Jesus Christ, where God’s presence is fully and most clearly manifest (Gaiser 2010:247). Thus, several motives come out of the NT gospels in the ministry of Jesus with regard to His healing enterprise - it was an expression of love, a response to a needy cry, an answer to prayers made, a manifestation of grace and a fulfillment of prophecy (Wilkinson 1988:40). There are also various approaches to healing in the ministry of Jesus; sometimes it was Jesus himself who took the initiative to heal, sometimes it was the sick who took the initiative to find healing, while at other times, it was other people who took the initiative for the sick to be healed including Jesus’s enemies who appeared to have taken the initiative for others to be healed (Wilkinson 1988:37).

Several methods have been used in the healing ministry of Jesus; healing through scriptural declarations, healing through the laying hands, healing by both prayers and touch, healing involving a spit and healing that is declared at a distance (Wilkinson 1988:47). The New Testament case where Jesus used saliva in the healing practice can possibly be used to argue for dangerous healing practices. The Biblical examples of Jesus using a mixture of saliva and mud (Mark: 7:33) complicate the discourse: if mud was a symbol of God’s creative ability, theological questions with regard to the symbolic meaning of ‘Doom’ follow. This is due to the contemporary

understanding of healing having been primarily based on how unique biblical cases of healing are understood and inferred as a literal practice. The function of saliva in cases where Jesus used it in the NT is not easy to assess - because saliva has no recognized healing properties (Wilkinson 1988:57). Unlike 'Doom' insecticide which is scientifically proven as harmful, the two elements cannot be categorized in the same bracket. Wilkinson (1988:56) also differentiates cases where Jesus used saliva in the gospels. In Mark 7:33, Jesus used his fingers in the case of a deaf mute; in Mark 8:23, Jesus spat directly onto the eyes of the blind man of Bethesda; and in the case of the man born blind, Jesus spat on the ground and used saliva to make a paste with dust, and then applied it to the blind man's eyes (John 9:6). Wilkinson (1988:56), however, argues that this ununiform pattern suggests no ritual pattern was being followed or prescribed, which is why the majority of the Christian church has not built healing doctrines on a 'mud healing technique'. Instead, it is argued that these are isolated examples out of many healings Jesus conducted; thus, majority of the healings took place when Jesus just spoke the "Word." (Wilkinson 1988:39). Furthermore, healing in the New Testament gospels appears to have been carried out in the context of preaching and teaching. Thus, the challenge of symbolism is 'experience'; experience differs with context, time and many other factors. Rather than using a means that frightens congregants, a safe conduct of healing is recommended in this study. Scripture is replete with announcements and examples of the power of God's "Word" and the efficacy of human words (Gaiser 2010:173). Generally, the New Testament healings are centralized on Jesus and the power of God, rather than resting on mere objects.

#### **4.2.3 Critique of dangerous healing practices**

Whilst the Old Testament does not primarily present healing in physical terms; there is a contrast to modern healing techniques which mainly address the physical aspect of healing (Wilkinson 1988:04). There, nevertheless, are several cases in the OT and NT that are difficult to interpret with regard to the forms of healing used. A consideration of such biblical examples may assist this study in the endeavor to understand what factors could possibly influence Neo-Pentecostal African leaders into engaging dangerous healings practices. Unlike some religious settings where the use of scripture is absent, the Neo-Pentecostal African setting use scriptural backing in finding biblical validation for such practices.

Wilkinson (1988:287) defines healing as the restoration of life in its totality, for the word ‘health’ is considered as coming from the root word ‘*hal*’ which means ‘whole’. Wholeness can, therefore, be considered a divine act of God’s love through his salvific grace for creation. The challenge of dangerous healing practices is the attempt to bypass the essential ethical overtones that uphold social norm and values. Unlike many Neo-Pentecostal prophets who are conducting healing sessions without careful consideration of dangerous implications, Classical Pentecostals pray for one to attain healing, they often bear in mind both a physical cure from disease and a holistic healing process that would suggest a sense of emotional and spiritual wholeness (Brown 2012:25). Here the inclusion of dangerous healing practices into Neo-Pentecostalism in Africa, risks the inclusion of other pagan practices into the Pentecostal faith. In history, the handling of snakes can be traced to Bill Carter’s church, which was known for making congregants handle snakes (Cox 2001:129). Some of the groups in the Classical Pentecostalism wave were characterized by frantic emotionalism, hair pulling and passing round poisoners snakes in meetings to prove that God protects the handler, although these are seldom seen in Classical gatherings today (Greet 1975:42). Some Classical Pentecostals, however, still tend to believe in experiential theology, however, experiential theology can be argued against its constructions because of the vastness, ambiguity and spontaneity revolving around shared experiences.

### 4.3. Classical Pentecostal Narrative

This historical account is aimed at giving a background to the Classical Pentecostal theological reflection with regard to healing, thus, it is not a repetition of the narrative in Chapter 2<sup>109</sup>. As it were, much of Pentecostal liturgy may not be understood through doctrine and dogma alone, but also through narratives about the movement (Cox 2001:58). It is Classical Pentecostalism that has laid a foundation for the emergence of Neo-Pentecostalism. It should, however, be noted that while the two waves may have similarity with regard to glossalia, but what they have in common, does not totally identify the two groups as having common activities and beliefs (Cox 2001:76). According to Anderson (1992:3), the ‘Classical’ nomenclature is accredited to a significant wave or revival that shook the world emanating from the Azusa street meetings led by Seymour<sup>110</sup>. The

<sup>109</sup> Chapter 2, section 2.2 has focused on the Neo-Pentecostal historical formation

<sup>110</sup> According to Anderson (1992:3), Pentecostal churches whose historical origins are founded at the beginning of the 20th century and who generally subscribe to the ‘initial’ evidence theory, are sometimes referred to as ‘Classical Pentecostals’

Azusa street revival marked the unveiling of a new dawn for international Pentecostal formation and establishment, resulting in the Pentecostal wave overlapping into other denominations, albeit, those who were caught up with the Pentecostal flame never chose to leave their conservative settings but remained charismatic within mainline groups. According to Thiselton (2015:729), some of those who remained within mainline churches prefer not to be classified under the Pentecostal bracket but regard themselves as belonging to the ‘Renewal’ movement. The term ‘Classical Pentecostal’ has, however, been generally used to make a distinction between ‘older’ Pentecostal churches and the newer ‘Neo-Pentecostal’ Churches (Anderson 1992:07). In relation to church planting, the Neo-Pentecostals have developed unique and indigenous ministry nomenclatures. Classical Pentecostals, have largely maintained denominational and organizational names over and above the identity of the local church. Classical Pentecostals are known to have established and built many churches all over the world, although such churches are under different denominational coverings<sup>111</sup>. For example, one may find an assembly belonging to the Apostolic Faith Mission as having a local name that may be different from another nearby assembly but both assemblies might belong to one denomination<sup>112</sup>.

Thiselton (2015:730) Finds that one of the differences between Classical Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals is that some Neo-Pentecostals would embrace the multiple ‘fillings’ of the Holy Spirit and that they emphasize in excess the exhibition of the Spirit’s power as a younger movement. Socially, the Classical Pentecostal movement is said to have erupted from people who were disenfranchised and who, therefore, envisioned a human community that is restored by the power of the Spirit and a utopic Jerusalem where weeping, injustice, and death are abolished (Cox 2002:24). Some Classical Pentecostal revivalists are believed to have gone to the extent of establishing healing homes following the vast testimonies that came out of the healing services. The centrality of healing within in what is now termed Classical Pentecostalism has led many - especially those who are economically disadvantaged and who cannot afford a basic medical insurance – find and embrace spiritual ways and means of attaining healing and prosperity.

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<sup>111</sup>Anderson (1992:04), notes that there is a historical and theological link between these churches; although Classical Pentecostals may not be fond of such an idea because they see the members of the Zionist category as needing to be ‘saved’.

<sup>112</sup> AFM Grace life Assembly, AFM Philadelphia Assembly and AFM New Life Assembly, just to name a few.



#### 4.3.1 Classical Pentecostalism in Southern Africa

This section acknowledges the voluminous Pentecostal scholarship in relation to its establishment in Africa. This study, however, does not seek to exhaust the various narratives about the movement, but to briefly look at the relevant figure's worth mention in its establishment in the region. During the era of the spreading of the Pentecostal faith, Moreau (2000:738) notes that early Pentecostal missionaries were often ill-prepared - travelling without salary or pledged support and without any cross-cultural preparation but were robust in the faith in the spreading of the gospel on missing grounds. Today, Pentecostal faith has elements of radicalism in terms of its missional enterprise and evangelism. Thus, many Classical denominations in Africa were established based on the invitation of European missionaries by indigenous Christians, whilst other denominations were established by missionaries who felt led by the Holy Spirit to 'spread the fire' (Kalu 2008:41). This resulted in the impact of the Pentecostal missional enterprise reaching unto the southern hemisphere of the African continent. According to Bowden & Johns (2005:910), the Pentecostal movement found roots in the Southern African soil during the 1908 period and then spread rapidly throughout the continent ever since. Anderson (1992:73) finds that Pentecostalism has thrived on the African continent because of its characteristics which are more acceptable in an African cultural setting than they are in some European settings. Cox (2001:254) distinguishes between African Pentecostalism and their Western counterparts in that healing has become a much more central activity in African Pentecostalism, having much liturgy and preaching revolving around it. Similarly, Gifford (2011:251) sees for healing and prosperity as the defining characteristics of African Pentecostalism, although one can argue for other themes that are dominant in other churches. Here, Kalu (2008:265) asserts that the language of health in many African communities, is connected to the understanding of a life of harmony.

In Zimbabwe the Apostolic Faith Mission was established in the year 1915 - it celebrated 100 years of existence in the year 2015<sup>113</sup>. The Apostolic Faith Mission and the Assemblies of God are amongst the most popular Classical Pentecostal denominations. They have been active in South Africa and have played a role in the emergence of some of Neo-Pentecostals and the Independent Churches (Anderson 2005:69). In South Africa, Pentecostal churches of western origin have operated in the country for most of the twentieth century - it is asserted that the Apartheid system

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<sup>113</sup> Accessed [Online] 2018, June 18 <http://www.afminzimbabwe.org/>



and the enforced racial discrimination within early Pentecostalism, this resulted in many Africans rejecting European Christian teachings leading to the mushrooming of many indigenous churches founded by individuals who had no western links (Anderson 2005:70). Andrew Murray who belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church, had established the charismatic tradition, distinguished by emphasizing a lifestyle of holiness, spirit baptism, and divine healing (Kalu 2008:56). He introduced to South Africa the two-stage way of Salvation and the Holy Spirit baptism, as well as introducing a doctrine concerning the healing of the sick through prayers (Hollenweger 1972:114). Also in South Africa, one of the popularly known healing evangelists was Nicholas Bhengu, who was known for great healings (Anderson 1992:47). Since healing is important to African Pentecostals, this study acknowledges the modifications and alterations within Pentecostalism with regard to normative healing practices. The understanding of healing within Classical Pentecostalism might have originated from Bhengu's stance towards sickness as an ailment that can be dealt with in prayer and is founded upon the understanding that Jesus' redemption is final (Hollenweger 1972:129). Bhengu is believed to have been a great inspiration to Ezekiel Guti of Zimbabwe and Mensah Otabil of Ghana, having constructed a tight-knit community in which members drew moral boundaries against alcohol, drinking, popular culture, gambling, dancing and the use of traditional medicine (Kalu 2008:59).

#### **4.3.2 Classical Pentecostalism in relation to the 'Word of Faith Movement'**

There is a relationship between faith and healing, although that relationship is not calculable or predictable (Gaiser 2010:248). The theological framework of the 'Faith Movement' has, to some extent, impacted the modern understanding of healing and prosperity within Pentecostalism. According to Morris & Lioy (2012:84) Quimby is said to have popularized the Word of Faith movement. Quimby embraced the concept of suffering as originating from wrong thought patterns, asserting a position that illness is curable through positive thinking (Morris & Lioy 2012:84). Another major player who is acknowledged as the key church father in the Word of Faith movement is Kenyon whose influence has remained in some Pentecostal settings (Morris & Lioy 2012:83). Kenneth Erwin Hagin (1917-2003) is regarded as one who propounded the teachings of Kenyon and popularized the movement even further (Hanegraaff 2009:17). From the Word of Faith theological framework, faith is not merely an act in response to God's will through trusting in the scriptures; but rather, it is a spiritual force one directs towards God,' (Morris & Lioy (2012:102). According to Morris & Lioy (2012:74), the word of faith teachings suggests an

anthropocentric worldview, in which Christians are entitled to wealth, health and prosperity, which are obtainable by exercising one's faith. Although elements of Pentecostalism at large exist within the Word of Faith movement, some of those elements are appropriated outside the mainstream Pentecostal theology (Morris & Lioy 2012:76).

Cox (2001:272) finds that the Word of Faith movement could have possibly adopted positive thinking which leads to positive confession - positive confession of scripture generating faith enough to manifest the desired result. The confession claims are informed by the atonement benefits and the covenantal blessing pronounced upon Abraham, also affecting his offspring (Cox 2001:271). The results of the atonement, and the nature of the atonement are two primary components that are essential in assessing the Word of Faith theology (Morris & Lioy 2012:99). As it were, the Classical Pentecostals understanding of healing has, to some extent, been impacted by the Word of Faith movement since both movements would agree on such tenets founded in the atonement. Whilst the reformed view on healing considers God as the sovereign healer; the Word of Faith Movement believes that faith is the primary requirement for healing because its already provided for in the atoning grace. In other instances, the Classical Pentecostals tend to have both perspectives on healing.

With regard to the foursquare gospel, Jesus the Savior, Baptizer in the Spirit, Healer and Coming King – receive strong emphasis in the Faith movement teachings (Horn 1989:02). The historical roots of the Faith movement are imbedded with the Classical formation of Pentecostalism (Horn 1989:03).

#### **4.5 Theological reflection on healing and power within Classical Pentecostalism**

One contributing factor to Pentecostals having maintained a healing tradition that resonates with the scriptures and dignity is the establishment of training institutions like bible colleges where a practice is academically examined before execution. The establishment of formal institutions, with the endeavor to promote and preserve certain Biblical values, ethical values and principles, has allowed Classical Pentecostal denominations a commonality of practice. Thiselton (2015:664) confirms the establishment of bible schools within Classical Pentecostal history through the person of Parham, who is said to have founded a Bible school in Kansas at Topeka, when he began to teach a gospel of justification, Spirit baptism, divine healing and the imminence of the end-time. Some scholars, to some extent, have considered the movement as lacking an adequate theology

whilst others argue that the movement is defined by a theology which allows a personal spiritual encounter with God (Kalu 2008:06)<sup>114</sup>. Greet (1975:46), considers Pentecostal theology to be ‘thin’; but only focuses on the work of the Holy Spirit. The current global Pentecostal Movement, however, has become multi-faceted in theological beliefs. It can, therefore, be argued that it is difficult to define the movement theologically (Bowden & Johns, 2005:911)<sup>115</sup>. Although there are Pentecostal critics who would capitalize on the notion that Pentecostals lack or have a little theological training (a factor which is now changing) a definite theology is exhibited in their practices and in their interpretation of the Holy Spirit’s power in daily living (Anderson 1992:32). According to Thiselton (2015:667) their preaching often uses narrative, illustrations, and testimony, which tend to have priority over basic technical exegesis, logic, and theory. It is also the case that some Classical Pentecostal doctrinal developments were formulated mostly in response to religious experiences and by interacting with the narratives from the book of Acts (Lederle 2010:89). Hence, divine healing has become a major theme within Pentecostalism, with physical healing considered as the most frequent demonstration of God’s power in the early Pentecostal motto; “Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Lederle 60:2010).

Nevertheless, the three strands in Pentecostalism from its Classical form to its Neo-Pentecostal form, all differ in contextual theological scholarship due to the diversity of experiences, even though healing has remained a central feature and attraction to the Pentecostal faith. Prior to the Classical Pentecostal influence of Parham (1873-1929) and Seymour (1870-1922), Edward Irving (1792-1834) who is known for stressing the gifts of the Spirit, is remembered for emphasizing the ‘fourfold gospel’ of Christ as savior, sanctifier, healer, and coming king (Thiselton 664). According to Hollenweger (1972:118) Despite, the influence of other healing missionaries; it is Dowie who is believed to have brought back the healing of the sick into the foreground, having many followers in Switzerland, Holland, South Africa and the USA. The healing doctrines were formulated through the term “foursquare gospel” which identifies four saving activities of Jesus Christ, that is, as Spirit-baptizer, healer of the body, Jesus as savior and the returning King (Lederle 49:2010).

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<sup>114</sup> Literal understanding and interpretation of scripture is common within Pentecostal Churches. Anderson (2009:643), “Pentecostal literalism has been quite consistent with its roots in Healing movements who had an affinity for literalistic approaches to the text.”

<sup>115</sup> Charles Cullis established healing homes in 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Today, many Classical Pentecostal denominations believe in the fourfold gospel of Parham, although there may be other denominations that may have revised his teachings or chose to do away with his thinking. Parham's followers included healing evangelists like John G Lake and Gordon Lindsay, while the Apostolic Faith Mission denomination is considered to have developed from Dowie's Christian Catholic Church (Lederle 2010:63). The theological stance of Pentecostalism in America was adopted by a 1948 organization which was comprised of fifteen Pentecostal groups stating that their belief is anchored in the totality of the gospel: healing for the body, holiness of heart/life and baptism in the Holy Spirit (Nichol 1971:04).

Besides the foursquare gospel, "there were six strands or themes that held together the conceptual patchwork of the Pentecostal awakening, namely sanctification or purity, empowerment, healing, premillennial eschatology; spirit baptism and glossolalia, and unity across societal barriers" (Lederle 2010:50). According to Anderson (2009:646), healing emerged in the Holiness movement based on the scriptural text found in the book of Isaiah 53:4-5 and the book of Mathew 8:16-17<sup>116</sup>. Kalu (2008:06), quotes Donald Dayton who argues that the Classical Pentecostal identity has emphasis on charisma, conversion, and sanctification. The view of Christ being an example of a healer, savior and deliver, has influenced the Classical Pentecostals to emphasize charisma, conversion and sanctification (Kalu 2008:06). Scholars have demonstrated convincingly that Pentecostalism has deep Wesleyan roots and many Classical Pentecostals are said to having been deeply influenced by Wesley in relation to sanctification and purity (Lederle 2010:50). According to Cox (2001:74), Classical Pentecostals were obsessed with doctrinal purity, hence, many Classical Pentecostals tend to believe that God uses the pure or holy for the miraculous to manifest.

Bowden & Johns (2005:911) highlight theological controversies that arose in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these controversies emerged over the nature of sanctification in Chicago in 1910 with the teaching of William H. Durham who rejected the Holiness movements' emphasis upon sanctification as a second work of Grace but taught a 'finished work' theory which emphasized sanctification as progressive after conversion.

The connection between atonement and healing led many congregants to emphasize on realized eschatology (Horn 1989:26). The doctrine of 'atonement' with regard to healing became the

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<sup>116</sup> Isa 53:4-5, "by his wounds brought healing for humanity." Mathew 8:16-17, "He carried our infirmities" (KJV)

traditional position or view. Although early Pentecostals accepted healing provision in the atonement taught from this perspective, many Classical Pentecostals found a contradiction between their experience and their theology (Horn 1989:20). Some faced death after being ill and others who remained sick even though they knew and declared atonement rights, changed their healing doctrine, although they did not address the foundational tenets that healing was provided for in the atonement (Horn 1989:27). Hence, the ‘atonement’ approach can be classified under the conditional views on healing - setting terms that need to be fulfilled before attaining healing even though healing is not exclusive to Christians. According to Anderson (2009:646), early Pentecostals who taught that healing was part of the provision of Christ in his atonement, resulted in a healing culture that experienced the rise of holiness evangelists who became involved in the modern “faith cure” movements of the late 19th and early 20th century (Lederle 61:2010). Others such as Kelso Carter argued for healing to be based on a special answer to prayer rather than on the universal provisions of the atonement (Lederle 61:2010). While early Pentecostals believed that healing was part of the provisions of Christ in his atonement; today, many Classical Pentecostals believe in healing through prayer. A healing culture through prayer was, thus, developed but the connection between atonement and healing largely abandoned in later years (Anderson 2009:646).

Another doctrine that has remained in the Pentecostal movement is the doctrine of initial evidence, which has been foundational and common in Classical Pentecostal denominations such as the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Assemblies of God<sup>117</sup>. For Classical Pentecostals, spiritual gifts are a proof that the gospel is true (Anderson, 2009:646). According to Tarango (2011:11), Classical Pentecostals believe that the era of miracles did not end with the death of Jesus who is the pinnacle of the Christian faith, but His followers can also perform miracles.

#### **4.5.1 The Power View within Classical Pentecostalism**

Bodies are considered as vessels, and power is seen as a product of the anointing or the Holy Spirit’s power. Power views within Pentecostalism, as will be discussed in the next chapter (5.4.1), play a significant contribution to the praxis delivery of healing and prosperity discourse. The notion of power within Classical Pentecostalism has been primarily founded upon the

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<sup>117</sup> It entails that the initial evidence of Holy Spirit baptism is tongue talking experience.

pneumatological aspect of the book of Acts 1:8 account<sup>118</sup>. The scriptural understanding of Joel chapter 2:28 which talks about the outpouring of the Spirit, has been the bedrock of Pentecostal belief with regard to the Spirit's empowerment upon the church. Thus, power is understood as a spiritual enablement, intended to edify the body of Christ in preparation for the second coming of Christ. This section, however, has noted the source of healing within Classical Pentecostalism, thus, the next chapter (5.4) will look at the intersections of power relations in the healing discourse.

#### **4.5.2 Healing tradition in the movement**

Although healing may not be the primary focus of Classical Pentecostal preachings and teachings, it is considered one of the central elements that attests to God's intervention and reality (Anderson 2009:644). By the last decades of the 19th century, divine healing had become part and parcel of the Holiness movement in the United States (Lederle 63:2010). Amongst the other doctrines that have remained in the Pentecostal movement, some denominations have maintained a strict stance towards the indulgence of alcohol and forbid drunkenness, carousing and infidelity – as per the influence of the holiness strand (Cox 2001:171). Healing, however has become the central feature within the general Pentecostal liturgy (Cox 2001:110)<sup>119</sup>.

Classical Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals alike, embrace and understand that healing is narrowly linked to a worldview that sees spiritual forces as the cause for all deficiencies and illnesses (Gifford 2011:252). The concept of 'spiritual causality' has been a very prominent spiritual way that informs African communities in the quest to diagnose social ills. Hence, many African traditions assign meaning to sickness based on the 'spiritual causality' principle,<sup>120</sup> as mentioned in Chapter 2 (2.5.1). Badenhorst et al (1986:210-212) note that generally, Pentecostals believe that sickness originated from the fall of humankind through Adam and that it was originally the work of the devil. Further, Badenhorst et al (1986:210-212) observes that in the NT context, God does not punish people by making them sick, but that He sometimes uses sickness to communicate something meaningful in people's lives; that is, if humankind breaks God's laws or ignores them, the consequences thereof will lead to sickness<sup>121</sup>.

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<sup>118</sup> "but you shall receive power, after that the Holy ghost has is upon you" (KJV)

<sup>119</sup> Within Pentecostalism, it is an important aspect of the primal piety

<sup>120</sup> It presupposes a belief in the existence and imminence of unwholesome spirits causing social ills

<sup>121</sup> Implying that, there are some illness that are as a result of disobedience.

Looking at church planting strategies for Classical Pentecostals in history, healing crusades have proved to be an effective evangelism attraction within impoverished African communities. As a result, many Classical Pentecostal churches are established out of the healing crusades. With regard to healing, Classical Pentecostals may not be the first Christians in the world to preach divine healing at the same time emphasizing its embodiment through miraculous manifestations. Other Christian denominations do embrace a belief in the miraculous although methods of attaining miracles may differ. Anderson (1992:76) argues that healing is not only the main attraction to the movement, but that rather, many are attracted to the music, doctrine or the spiritual ambiance in the praise and worship atmosphere. Cox (2001:108) is of the view that the Pentecostals' ability to bridge the gap between the cure of the soul and the cure of the body to have granted them a global appeal. Hence, the influence of Pentecostals has managed to attract masses resulting in the establishment of mega churches.

There are several healing practices that have been traditionally accepted within Classical Pentecostalism such as the laying of hands through prayers, the use of oil and the use of scripture as normative for the healing practice. These are discussed in the sections that follow.

#### **4.5.2.1 The use of scripture**

Generally, the bible is the basis of action in Christendom, just as personal contact with God is of crucial significance that needs special discernment (Dickow et al., 2012:19). Badenhorst et al (1986:210-212) argues that for healing is provided for in the redemptive work of Christ (Isa 53:5 and 1 Pt 2:24); that Jesus set an example for his disciples and church by praying for all the sick and those who came to him for healing and He healed them all. Thiselton (2015:667) also adds that the bible remains a primary authority; even though, scripture is understood through the “lens” of experience. According to Anderson (2009:643), many Classical Pentecostal preachers constantly interplay scripture with day to day activities; presenting the scriptural text as a reflection of common experience<sup>122</sup>. The fact that Pentecostals relate life experiences with the biblical text in their preaching, is often misunderstood as having all Pentecostal grouping solely relying on life experiences as mandatory for preaching, much of their narratives draws similarities from biblical stories of the Old Testament by which the text becomes the bedrock of their life experiences. For

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<sup>122</sup>Pentecostals believe in the experiential immediacy of the Holy Spirit who makes the bible “alive (Anderson, 2009:643).



example, exorcism is regarded as a continuation of the NT practice whereby disciples who were endowed with special deliverance abilities were commanded to cast out devils and to heal the sick (Anderson 2009:647). The inclusion of experience in Pentecostal exegeses, however requires more work to be done with regard to Pentecostal hermeneutics, which contours a Pentecostal preunderstanding as a fixed presupposition or “lens” of the reader, rather than a moving horizon that the text can correct and expand (Thiselton, 2015, p. 669)<sup>123</sup>. Nevertheless, the belief that curbs Classical Pentecostal experience; is the “full gospel” or four-square understanding in preaching and teaching (as aforementioned) which is essentially understood as a Christological paradigm where Christ is centrally the Healer, Savior, Baptizer and soon coming King (Anderson 2009:644)<sup>124</sup>. According to Kalu (2008:06), Pentecostal Christology sees Christ in relationship as healer, sanctifier, one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit, and sustainer of the hope of glory. The understanding of Christ as the healer has led to the appropriation of healing through healing prayers within Classical Pentecostalism.

According to Tarango (2011:108), Jesus is the great physician who healed hearts, bodies and minds. In some Pentecostal settings, the Classical Pentecostal benefits of atonement are still reinforced (Harrel 1975:85). Thus, there are still Pentecostal churches who administer healing prayers only after confessions have been made using the biblical text in the book of James; “He forgives all your inequities” Nichol (1971:15-16). Here the soteriological foundation of healing is the most acceptable basis of understanding healing<sup>125</sup>. Nichol (1971:02) notes that “Pentecostals subscribe to the reformation principles that salvation is a free gift of divine grace apart from deeds and efforts or ecclesiastical sanction; that all Christian believers are priests by virtue of their association in the church, the body of Christ, and as such minister to each other in matters of faith; that the Word of God must be the norm for faith and practice, and that it is each Christian’s right and duty to interpret it for himself”. Generally, Pentecostals believe that the preaching of the Word in evangelism should be followed by the demonstration of power through “signs and wonders” - thus, divine healing has become an indispensable part of their evangelism (Anderson 2009:644).

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<sup>123</sup> Pentecostal hermeneutics also needs to appreciate the diversity of the narrative, which is only in some cases a “paradigm” for today.

<sup>124</sup> Pentecostals understand this full gospel to contain good news for all life’s problems, particularly relevant in the societies of the developing world where disease is rife and access to adequate health care is a luxury (Anderson 2009:644).

<sup>125</sup> A holistic approach to healing



Within Classical Pentecostalism, scripture is used to affirm Christ's lordship over sickness and diseases, whilst in many Neo-Pentecostal African churches, the use of scripture is used to support dangerous practices. With regard to Pentecostal pneumatology, general emphasis for the miraculous is that faith is essential for one to attain divine healing, hence Pentecostal preachers often assign multiple meanings to a biblical text trying to explore a "deeper significance" of the text to congregants so as to arouse faith for miracles (Anderson 2009:643)<sup>126</sup>.

Unlike many Neo-Pentecostal ministers who may not appreciate theological training, within Classical Pentecostal ministers who desire the office of an ordained preacher, are obligated to undergo theological training to obtain the general doctrines that are upheld by their own denomination. The newly introduced teaching of a so-called "spiritual father" within several Christian domains, has led many Neo-Pentecostal followers to undermine theological training, as they sorely depend on the "spiritual father" figure as a theological yardstick of their faith. In contrast to the "spiritual father" phenomenon, Classical Pentecostal denominations encourage believers to develop a personal relationship with their God, and to develop a strong sense of divine direction by themselves (Anderson 1992:9). Asamoah-Gyadu (2015:176) argues for a Christological hermeneutics in which Jesus Christ becomes the standard. Although Pentecostal teachings within its Classical roots and its Neo form significantly differ, the bible ought to remain normative and prescriptive for governing Pentecostal experiences.

This study does not nullify the fact that the Bible is also used as a point of reference within Neo-Pentecostal churches but it challenges the use of scripture in support of dangerous healing practices. There is a tendency for some "prophets" within Neo-Pentecostal African churches to make use of selective hermeneutics, especially in relation to prosperity and power to benefit themselves at the expense of a deprived congregation that is starved from soteriological truths. Here, Asamoah-Gyadu (2015) states that Pentecostalism should seek to be biblically sound and true to what was evident in the life of Jesus.

#### **4.5.2.2 The laying of hands in prayer**

Historically, divine healing has never died, but the practice of laying hands resurfaced in terms of visibility within the Pentecostal movement in the 1900s by the ministry of Aimee Semple

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<sup>126</sup> Usually, OT narratives and testimonies dominate the whole sermons.

McPherson (Cox 2001:109). The adherent Classical Pentecostal followers have developed a tradition of practising the laying on of hands, because the practice has been effective and has been seen in scripture. The Classical Pentecostal practice of laying hands when praying for the sick person emanated from a scriptural understanding that Jesus Christ exercised authority over sickness through prayer. The New Testament (James 5:14-15) text concerning the laying on of hands on the sick has become the bedrock for the healing tradition within Classical Pentecostalism and majority of Christians around the world. Many Christian believers have literally interpreted Mark 16:18 which is about the laying on of hands. This study argues for a healing phenomenon that should be administered with dignity. Also, with regard to the impartation of spiritual gifts, the focus of laying on of hands when imparting the charismata was revived when revival broke out in 1948 in Canada<sup>127</sup> (Lederle 2010:85).

The general norm amongst Classical Pentecostals' healing heritage, is scripture declarations invoking the 'healing anointing' when praying for healing. Today in South Africa, many Classical Pentecostal churches subscribe to the doctrine of attaining healing either by the laying on of hands or through fervent prayer and intercession for the sick person. This practice has become a normative activity when dealing with illness within many denominations in Pentecostalism. Whilst, some Neo-Pentecostal Prophets are introducing dangerous healing practices to the healing heritage, Classical Pentecostals are conducting healing through a traditional understanding of scripture where they exercise faith through the act of laying hands on the sick person. Critically, the experiential aspect and the free-spirited attitude of some Neo-Pentecostals in African churches, have resulted in a lack of restraint towards the abuse of congregants, especially women within the community<sup>128</sup>.

For Classical Pentecostals, prayer has been considered an instrumental for communicating with the transcendent God, for petitions, thanksgiving and for conducting healing for the sick<sup>129</sup>. It should, nevertheless be noted that there are many religions and non-religious people who practice prayer and that in Christianity, prayer encompasses a wide range of varieties as prayer may be liturgical, conversational, meditative, or petitionary (Brown 2012:24). Usually, prayerful

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<sup>127</sup> This was dubbed the "latter rain".

<sup>128</sup> The Church should be a safe place for the marginalized, disempowered and those vulnerable within our communities.

<sup>129</sup> The tongue talking experience is one of the effective ways of executing spiritual prayers.

declarations and decrees are made by persons who would be conducting healing or deliverance sessions, but, the way one chooses to articulate prayer usually varies with the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Classical Pentecostals have strong faith in the bible texts that talk about healing, so much so that, they recite healing scriptures whilst believing in the resuscitation and recovery of the sick person. The practice of laying hands on the sick may not give a concise explanation in the medical scientific world but religiously, it reveals the greater imminence of God's power. Thus, scattered reports of healing through prayer can be found throughout the church legacy as far as the days of the early church (Brown 2012:28).

#### **4.5.2.3 Use of Oil**

In the Old Testament, oil was used when appointing kings (1 Sam 9:16); ordination of priests (Exodus 28:41); for anointing prophets (1 Kings 19:16) and embalming bodies (Mk 16:1). In the New Testament, the book of James accounts the usage of oil and the laying of hands upon the sick person (Nichol 1971:15-16). The OT oil was mainly for anointing kings but in the New testament, disciples used oil on many of those that were sick (Mark 6:13). The Biblical passage in the book of John 5:14-16 which entails the use of oil when laying hands on the sick has been considered as prescriptive in some Pentecostal settings but many have resorted to symbolic styles of appropriating the Spirit's power, resulting in the introduction of dangerous practices when conducting healing sessions. Here, Anderson (1992:117) notes that within Classical formative days of Pentecostalism, much emphasis was placed on freedom, equity within the community and dignity by not bringing shame to the person in need of healing. Here, ethical overtones regulate behavior towards the usage of symbols.

Although, the use of oil in biblical accounts has been adopted as a symbolic gesture in most Classical Pentecostal churches, many prophets belonging to the Neo-Pentecostal grouping have found a theological premise to justify dangerous healing practices. Generally, Classical Pentecostals are opposed to the idea of making use of dangerous objects, and in many settings, they limit symbolic healing technics to the use of oil. The term 'anointing' is attempting to describe oil that has been consecrated through prayer, thus it becomes anointed oil<sup>130</sup>. In many Classical Pentecostal settings, the Holy Spirit is given credit for all spiritual happenings; causing people to

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<sup>130</sup> The term anointing oil is adopted from the Old Testament practices whereby oil was used when anointing a divinely chosen individual.

speak in tongues, utter prophetic words, command healings and deliverance, as the “leader” of all its activities (Anderson 2009:642). The question to ask here is why some forms of symbolic healing received and why some others are discarded (Anderson & Otwang 1993:137).

#### **4.6 Further perspectives on Healing**

Christian alternative terminologies with regard to healing/health include divine healing, faith healing, spiritual healing or prayer healing, which are most used interchangeably (Brown 2012:25). Cox (2001:129) observed that some Pentecostals are hostile towards their use of medicine whether traditional or clinical medicine. Brown (2012:25) argues that many healers within Neo-Pentecostalism as not envisioning healing as benefiting body, mind and spirit but the Pentecostal belief has not remained the same over time - there were several instances whereby other alternative healing practices are introduced. Good eating habits leading a healthy lifestyle, bodily exercises and the use of medication, have been a significant contribution to the Pentecostal world. Abbie C. Morrow, who presaged a spiritual diet regime by insisting that the Bible teaches believers only to stick to fruits, grains, vegetables and nuts; is said to have caused splits within the movement because of such contentions in developing a belief system (Cox 2001:76).

There still remains those Pentecostals who reject the use of medicine, whether traditional or modern because of a world view that sees the use of medication as lack of faith (Anderson 2009:646). Many, in Africa, have died especially of malaria or other chronic diseases because of the gospel of rejecting medicine, but this has been toned down, although taboos against alcohol and tobacco are still embraced in some of the Classical Pentecostal denominations such as the AFM (Anderson 1992:22). Also, there are Classical Pentecostals who believe in the ministry of doctors and pray for the hands of surgeons and the effectual working of medicines - then they credit God for the healing achieved (Brown 2012:25)<sup>131</sup>. Although many Pentecostals believe in the divine aspect of healing, many religious persons embrace the reality of healing through natural processes Cox (2001:109). A few medical researchers have begun to ask whether what they call “alternative states of consciousness,” or trances (being “slain in the Lord”), can help release the body’s inner healings mechanisms (Cox 2001:109). Another dimension of healing in South Africa

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<sup>131</sup> “This world view emanates from the understanding that God as well as angels and demons, may intervene in the natural world by working against -or through – biomedical or Psychonomic processes.”

which might be of interest; healing can also be interpreted as forgiveness from white hatred and the injustices that took place and disadvantaged the black people (Cox 2001:108).

With regard to traditional rituals in healing, Classical Pentecostals are opposed to the traditional practices such as consulting witch doctors and making rituals for ancestors or any tendency to venerate them in any way other than respect (Anderson 1992:65). Generally, Classical Pentecostals believe that ancestors or demonic forces, have no power over Christians; because the Holy Spirit dwells within believers (Nkurunziza 2013:69). Hence, the way Classical Pentecostals conduct healing is far opposed to the newly introduced dangerous healing practices<sup>132</sup>. Here the argument stands upon the fact that God is doing something new (experiential theology) while, the healing praxis of the Classical Pentecostals takes on a doctrinal stance.

#### **4.6.1 The sick not getting healed**

For some Pentecostals, physical healing is regarded as a believer's right, expected and claimed boldly after the devil has been rebuked. The most problematic or extreme view, however, denies the effectual role of medicine when dealing with all lingering symptoms of illness (Lederle 154:2010). This may result in unexpected death of patients who would have survived if they had undergone medical treatment and attention through hospitalization. Here it should be noted that the majority of Classical Pentecostals have complemented medical care with spiritual care, that is, through prayer and the laying of hands conducted (sometimes) with the use of anointing oil (Wilkinson 1988:288). Nichol (1971:16-17) notes for example that one of the dilemmas that usually confront Pentecostals with regard to the healing ministry, is encountering no recovery of the sick person after prayers of faith have been conducted; however, a response to this situation is that the work of the atonement must leave a place for permitted sickness as an expression of divine purpose or wisdom. He also argues, like many Classical Pentecostals, that "sometimes healing is withheld as a test of faith; or, God permits sickness or affliction as a chastisement owing to sin or disobedience; or, owing to lack of faith on the part of the Christian; or, to further His plan" (Nichol 1971:17). People who may not experience healing should not feel out of place or inadequate. People will always fall into sickness even after being cured as there is a provision for human species to experience a chronic or seasonal sickness in a life experience. Similarly, there should be provision for God's sovereignty in healing; He chooses who to heal at the time He wills to do

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<sup>132</sup> Dangerous healing practices are seemingly having connotations of a diabolical ancestral influence

so. Whether healing becomes spectacular or a process that takes time, the aspect of God's divine intervention is continuously testified when natural medicine fails to bring someone back to health (Brown 2012:25).

## 4.7 Conclusion

The CRL Rights Commission in South Africa has criticized the dangerous healing practices because of the implications posed within religious community. It seems like healing through prayer alone without any extra human intervention, distinguishes those who believe in laying hands from Neo-Pentecostal dangerous healing practices <sup>133</sup>. Healing is wholeness, this truth is reinforced repeatedly in the healing ministry of Jesus, 'a healing that addresses only the physical infirmity, and abandons the victims to perish in their sins, would be no healing at all (Ervin 2002:37). That means, the church ought to factor in the salvific benefits to the healing enterprise, rather than relegating healing to a physical issue. Thiselton (2015:666) finds that for Classical Pentecostals are those who believe that healing is not limited to the physical aspect of the body, but, can be emotional, psychological or rather holistically, touching every aspect of humanity. Thus, scriptural healing often should occur within the normal created order. "In the Bible this created order is never autonomous; it is in relationship with God, meaning that it can be an avenue of God's healing activity and, also that it is properly subjected to critique when misused" (Gaiser 2010:247). Divine healing has become one of the accepted ways of attaining health within society; however, if the God's spoken Word and our faith into the Word is enough for healing, then symbolism can be substituted by the less complicated mechanism of communicating healing. Although, early Classical Pentecostals emphasized freedom, equity and dignity of each person in the sight of God, ethics and societal norms have a place in regulating behavior in the community (Anderson 1992:117). This study acknowledges that healing is not experienced by Pentecostal Christians only, but is a global phenomenon that requires a holistic approach, embracing the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual aspects of life. Many Classical Pentecostal denominations have chosen a model of transmitting or communicating healing that is not physically harmful or,

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<sup>133</sup> Healing through a prayer of faith is not only exclusive to Classical Pentecostal faith; rather many other denominations also conduct healing sessions through prayer. However, for this study, Classical Pentecostal understanding of healing is highlighted.

psychologically disturbing, does not incite sexual arousal or bring shame to the recipients of healing.

Healing methods should be communicated to the sick person with care, bearing in mind, the person's safety and human dignity. Thus, this study acknowledges that passionate actions are very important when praying for the sick person. The previous chapter has acknowledged a holistic approach. Thus, such an approach should not be wounding, inciting fear or inflicting pain or inciting a psychological torture, it must address all aspects of the total persona. Also, diseased folk ought to be assured of God's love and care for them. Approaching healing from a wholesome view, entails healing as physical, healing as psychological and healing as spiritual; thus, a holistic perspective must encapsulate these elements. Owing to the fact that sickness could be emotionally, spiritually or psychologically driven, healing ceases to be simply a physical issue., the gospel of Jesus Christ must have something to say to both the rich and the poor, the sick and the healthy, the winner and the loser, the champion and the defeated (Asamoah-Gyadu 174:2015). Pentecostalism throughout the ages, has been filled with a sense of meeting the basic human needs and not just the 'spiritual' part of life (Anderson 1992:116). According to Kalu (2008:265) health can also be achieved through reconciliation among human beings as well as by restoring the integrity of creation. This chapter has argued that healing should be based on biblical models, whilst taking into consideration the role of culture, modernization or experience<sup>134</sup>. This leaves room for further study whereby an explicit deduction of healing practices maybe looked at closely. The next chapter shall analyze key factors that intersect with healing, gender and power within Pentecostalism, with regard to dangerous healing practices and the prophet of doom.

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<sup>134</sup> Although considerable differences may arise in terms of other doctrinal tenets

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF HEALING, POWER AND GENDER IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCOURSE**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

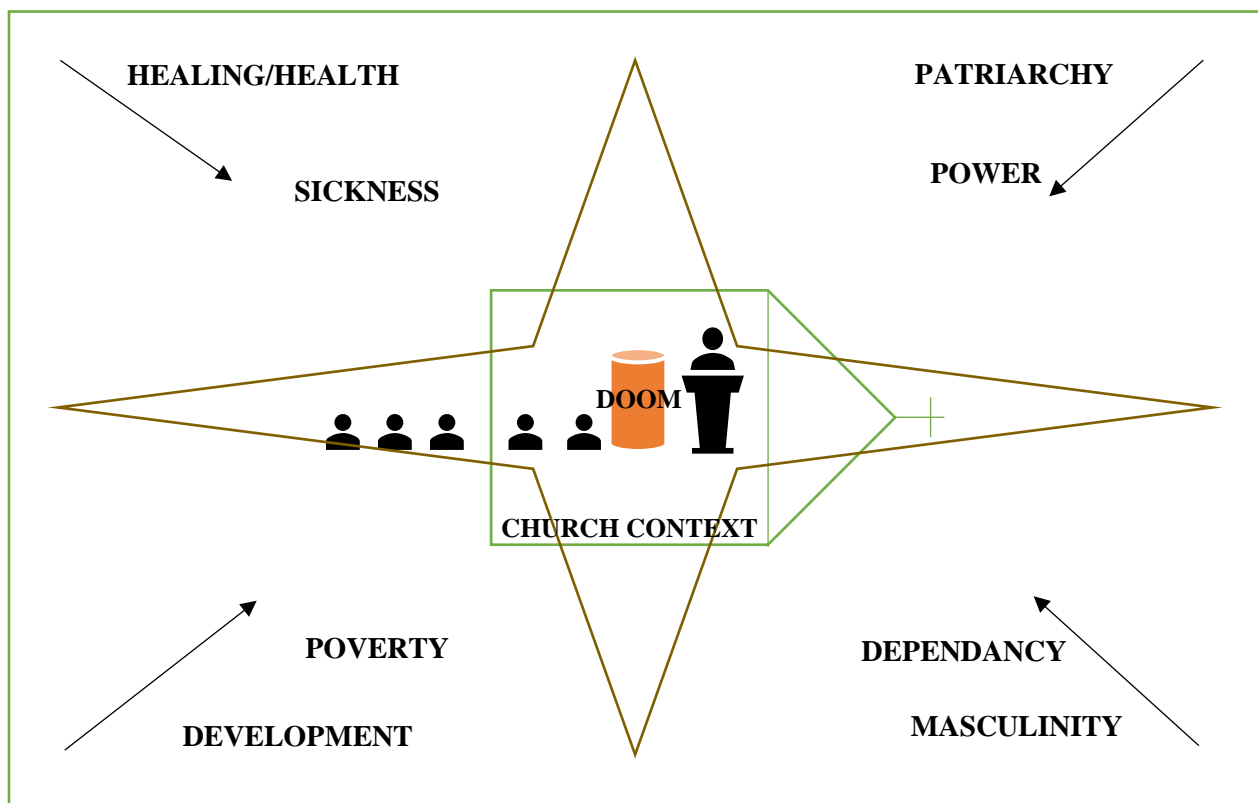
The previous chapter has provided a theological overview of healing and power, while analyzing the Classical Pentecostal understanding of healing with regard to what should be going on within the Pentecostal heritage of healing. This chapter attempts to achieve the 4<sup>th</sup> research objective as stated in the Chapter 1.4, which is to engage the interpretative task within a practical theological methodology as promoted by Osmer. To achieve this research objective, this chapter interrogates the intersection of healing, power and gender using poverty as the immediate context. I will introduce the concept of intersection/ality and use the model to analyze issues raised as a result of the introduction of dangerous healing practices. In the attempt to analyze the dangerous healing practices within Neo-Pentecostalism, I will use the Classical Pentecostal understanding of healing to analyze healing and power dynamics. Furthermore, I will analyze gender-related issues raised at the intersection with regards to the cultural contribution of patriarchy in Neo-Pentecostal African churches. These issues have arisen within impoverished environments, thus, the role that religion plays within the community constantly interplays with socio-economic issues that are faced by congregants, who are also experiencing developmental challenges in African societies. Although there are innumerable issues to be cited at the intersection, the chapter will only focus on relevant factors deemed significant in the healing, power and gender study. In concluding this chapter, the evaluation of various factors at the intersection is only peripheral because of the complexity founded at the intersection, thus, much room is available for further study.

#### **5.2 Intersection/ality**

Davis (2008:67-85) defines intersection/ality “as the interaction of multiple identities and experiences of exclusion and subordination.” Furthermore, Davis (2008:68) elaborates on the meaning of intersection/ality as referring to the “interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power.” Historically, the term, ‘intersectionality’ was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), with the aim of addressing the



fact that “the experiences and struggles of women of colour fell between the cracks of both feminist and anti-racist discourse” (Davis 2008:68). Fundamentally, an intersectional model facilitates a broader conversation, and raises ambiguity and complexity around a gendered phenomenon, hence, dangerous healing practices are analysed using such a model. With regards to the usage of the notion of intersection/ality in social theory, Davis (2008:67) notes the ambiguity and open-endedness imbedded within intersectionality as both its strength and its weakness. Since the ‘Doom’ incident and its related dangerous healing practices have fallen into the gender inquiry, it is necessary for this study to make use of such a theory to facilitate an analysis of the power dynamics within such settings. It should be noted that “controversies have emerged about whether intersectionality should be conceptualized as a crossroad (Crenshaw, 1991), as ‘axes’ of difference (Yuval-Davis, 2006), or as a dynamic process (Staunaes, 2003)” (Davis 2008:68). Thus, intersection/ality is used to refer not only to gendered perceptions; but can also be modelled in different research studies<sup>135</sup>.



<sup>135</sup> Arguments against the concept: “whether intersection/ality should be limited to understanding individual experiences, theorizing identities, or whether it should be taken as a property of social structures and cultural discourses” (Davis 2008:68).

*Figure 2: The Intersection with regards to the dangerous healing practices*

The above diagram illustrates the factors that have found interest in this study, which also widens the intersectional scope of this chapter. Attempting to interpret the ‘Doom’ phenomenon as a singular religious activity exempted from other social entities, limits the scope. Hence, figure 1 has taken into consideration the socio-economic challenges associated with a range of dangerous healing practices. Burkey (1993:13) outlines vicious circles of poverty where “one problem causes another which in turn causes another and repeats over and over again.” The inter-relatedness of issues represented in the diagram patterns a model that displays the correlation of various factors perpetuating circles of poverty and maintains it.

### **5.3 Healing at the intersection**

Healing as a word or as a condition, has various meanings understood differently in various contexts. In Chapter 4, this research looked at healing from a theological perspective and considered how Classical Pentecostals understand healing. In this section, a further intersectional analysis between the Classical Pentecostal understanding of healing and the Neo-Pentecostal understanding of healing shall be conducted in light of the biblical text.

#### **5.3.1 Classical Pentecostal understanding of healing**

For Classical Pentecostals, various views arose at the time the entire movement was trying to establish common beliefs and theology. As analyzed in Chapter 4, three main theologies stand out in the Classical Pentecostal formation, namely the atonement view, the pneumatological view and healing as a product of God’s sovereignty. In Classical Pentecostalism, there were two distinct sides to healing, that is, the atonement aspect and the pneumatological aspect. Alexander Dowie is said to have chosen a pneumatological grounding of healing, rather than the soteriological one (Horn 1989:12)<sup>136</sup>. With regards to the latter, Simpson, who founded Christian Alliance, considered “healing as grounded in the same theological basis as salvation” (Horn 1989:13). Additionally, Jonathan Paul propounded the ‘healing in the atonement’ view and concluded that if one comes to interpret healing as a radical result of the atonement, the same ought to be true of sin and death (Horn 1989:27)<sup>137</sup>. Paul then realized that “if healing was provided in the atonement, the same ought to be said about both sin and death” (Horn 1989:26). According to Horn (1989:32),

<sup>136</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Holiness movement emphasized the soteriological aspects of healing (Horn 1989:12).

<sup>137</sup> Jonathan Paul was the father of the German and Swiss Pentecostals.

t healing cannot be placed on the same level with salvation. He, therefore, argues that healing cannot be fully explained in the soteriological sphere as “one can only say that the atonement made healing a possibility and not an open guarantee” (Horn 1989:32)<sup>138</sup>.

The pneumatological view sees human beings as vessels and power belonging to Jesus. General Christian healing in its appeal sees Christ as the transcendent source of healing (Porterfield 2005:09). Classical Pentecostals understand the pneumatological dimensions of power, which in their understanding means that power is from God and for God. A further role player in the healing discourse, is the Faith Movement<sup>139</sup>. Although, the Faith Movement has impacted how healing was traditionally understood within Classical Pentecostalism, the pneumatological aspect of healing plays a less significant role in the teaching of the Faith Movement, as the primary basis of receiving healing within the Faith Movement is faith (Horn 1989:10). Also, the thrust of understanding healing within Faith Movements was backed up by a strong Arminian interpretation of grace (Horn 1989:10). Thus, the requirements of healing are faith and the scriptures, although others dispute that prayer cannot work without faith, nor can faith work without prayer in this view (Horn 1989:09).

The laying on of hands, healing prayers and healing through usage of anointing oil often characterizes healing rituals in Classical Pentecostal churches today. With regards to understanding God’s power to heal as sovereign, second and third generation Pentecostals did not teach (like the pioneers or some of the Faith Movement preachers) that “every sick person should be healed - instead, they laid much stronger emphasis on the sovereignty of God” (Horn 1989:03). That is to say, healing is at God’s disposal when He wills to heal. According to Carter (in Horn 1989:14), healing is both “bestowed, sometimes withheld, according to the supreme will of God”<sup>140</sup>. Thus, propounding the Faith Movement belief, faith may not be the only prerequisite for healing, neither is healing available only for those whose sins are atoned for, but is an act of God.

Furthermore, Wilkinson (1988:287) sees God as active in the work of creation, redemption and providence, where healing is provided for in God’s creation, redemptive work and providence. Healing that is provided through creation, providence and redemption refers to healing on the basis

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<sup>138</sup> For believers, healing is not mechanical or automatic (Horn 1989:32).

<sup>139</sup> Faith Movement can be used interchangeably with Word of Faith Movement

<sup>140</sup> Dayton (1983) PHD dissertation. Theological roots of Pentecostalism. University of Chicago, Chicago

of creation - a kind of healing practiced by the health care professionals, although it carries no answer to the problems of sin and death. Healing through redemption is provided by God through the ministry and the work of Jesus Christ while healing on the basis of provision refers to the 'gift' of healing given to certain individuals by the Holy Spirit. Porterfield (2005:05) finds that healing provided through creation is about repentance and forgiveness of sins, thus, there is a connection between sickness and sin at the root of Christian healing<sup>141</sup>. This relationship between sin and sickness has, however, led to the causative view when dealing with sickness in Africa - a view that is dominant amongst Neo-Pentecostals and which leads to the harmful view that people are ill due to personal sin in their lives.

With regards to the biblical basis of healing as noted in Chapter 4.2, "Classical Pentecostal experiences are often backed up, either implicitly or explicitly, by scriptural support or something that God has revealed" (Anderson 2009:644). The general Pentecostal healing phenomenon is that they centralize the Bible as both the key and the origin of the movement (Kalu 2008:13). For Classical Pentecostals The bible, therefore, becomes the "source text for miraculous answers to human needs as well as confirmation of the reality of supernatural experiences" (Anderson 2009:644). When Christ spoke about health, He spoke of blessedness and being whole (Wilkinson 1988:287). Thus, the general Biblical understanding of healing constitutes to a state of being a complete well-being<sup>142</sup>. While in this view, a full body recovery may grant confidence and peace, the absence of physical healing does not disqualify the fact that the ill person may possibly, find peace in contentment.

Errors also arose within the Classical Pentecostal healing heritage owing to the fact that some healing evangelists had embraced an extreme view of healing in the atonement, and started witnessing many true believers dying because of sickness and disease. John G Lake, a prominent leader, noted in his letter; "in many cases, evangelists had these people testify before great audiences that they were fully healed, only to discover in few days or weeks that they were not really healed, and many in disappointment went home to die," (Horn 1989:04)<sup>143</sup>. Thus, they realized that, "the problem with healing is that many people will still be sick, even after they have

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<sup>141</sup> Healing provided by medical doctors may not provided answers to the issue of sin; proper healing has to address sin, thus spiritual methods of attaining healing becomes necessary.

<sup>142</sup> Being in a right relationship with God, the self and others and the environment (Wilkinson 1988:287).

<sup>143</sup> A Letter written by Lake (1935:02), to the AFM president in South Africa

applied all the rules and preconditions” (Horn 1989:09). Therefore, many Classical Pentecostals chose a sober understanding of healing; choosing the laying of hands with prayers made for recovery and acknowledging that God has the final say whether to heal or not to heal. This attitude accommodates the perfect work of the Spirit to take its course. While this stance is also accommodated in some Neo-Pentecostal African churches, some NPC leaders have chosen dangerous methods of conducting healings.

### **5.3.2. Healing that empowers**

It is clear that the understanding of healing amongst Classical Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostal African churches differs greatly. The intersectional analyses of this study preferences the Classical Pentecostal approach to healing because it also seeks to accommodate empowerment, edifies the faith of people in their God and demands respect of their bodies (Jesudasan et al., 2005:37-41). People may be healed physically from an illness, but not cured from factors that perpetuate the abuse of power and gender imbalances (Jesudasan et al., 2005:37-41). The Book of Acts chapter 3 example where Peter and John were asked for alms by the beggar at the Beautiful Gate but chose healing that empowers the beggar to walk freely, work freely and worship freely with others who worshipped in the sanctuary. Healing and health should not only target resuscitation of the physical body, but also empowering the total person. Wholeness is also enabling self-reliance, that is, “doing things for one self, maintaining one’s own confidence, making independent decisions – either as an individual or within the context of a collective group to which each member has voluntarily allied himself or herself” (Burkey 1993:50). Burkey (1993: xii) finds that “self-reliant development is the only foundation for true development – human, economic, political and social<sup>144</sup>.” When miracles are performed for the people but not through believer’s faith, then people will depend on the prophets for cure but not rely on God’s Word. Considering the ‘Doom spraying’ as performative, is a healing technique done for the congregants lacking empowerment for the congregants. Thus, healing includes not just bodily recuperation, but ought to address unemployment, family disputes, racism, marital discord, and controversies between factions in a tribe or village (Cox 2001:254). Healing, therefore, ought to be understood holistically as “one

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<sup>144</sup> A developmental framework that enhances human capital, self-reliant strategies that allows the poor to participate in their own development is ideal.

component of the kingdom of God which includes prosperity, abundance, wholeness and reconciled relationships with humans and spiritual worlds” (Tarango 2011:04).

### **5.3.3. Healing based on experience not Theology**

Although, as a religious Christian practice, “Christian healing has involved many diverse actions, including prayer, pilgrimage, penance, laying of hands, sacraments” (Porterfield 2005:09). Even so, some Neo-Pentecostal African Churches have moved on to introduce dangerous healing practices as healing techniques. Neo-Pentecostalism as highlighted in chapter 2.2, has its roots in Classical Pentecostalism. Thus, there are theological and liturgical influences that overlapped from Classical Pentecostalism to its Neo- form, especially with regard to the pneumatological aspect of healing. The third world Neo-Pentecostal phenomenon is, however, one “where experience and practice are more important than formal ideology or even theology” (Anderson 2001:183). This has led to the dangerous healing practices such as spraying of “Doom” insecticide, drinking petrol, eating grass and snakes amongst others. The aforementioned examples in Chapter 3 seemingly display an experiential thrust, as indeed, Prophet Lethebo spraying ‘Doom’ insecticide on congregants reflects a theology that is seemingly influenced by an experimental thrust. Thus, chapter 2 identified theological gaps in the dangerous healing phenomenon prevalent within some Neo-Pentecostal African churches, that is, the general understanding of healing has been popularized in relation the absence of sickness and illness. As stated in chapter 3.5, the rise of the prophet of ‘Doom’ has been accompanied by various implications such as the sexual, financial, physical, sociological and health challenges. Upon such realization, dangerous healing practices are not independent or isolated practices, there are factors and implications around such a phenomenon that problematizes them as aforementioned. Crowning the challenges sited at the intersection is the challenge to human dignity.

### **5.3.4. Healing and human dignity**

The concept of male and female dignity carries both theological and ethical importance (Matsveru & Gillham in Mouton 2015:48). Matsveru & Gillham in Mouton (2015:37) argue that “a Christian understanding of dignity transcends any human policies, conversions, charters, acts or any other such legislative instruments.” “A person does not merely have a body, it is the body, even though the person as such infinitely transcends bodily limits; thus, everything that involves the body involves the person as a whole” (Larchet 2002:14). The dangerous healing practices may be

considered as symbols which transmit healing, but illness is inevitably linked to the total person, that is, the psychological, the physiological, the emotional and the spiritual. Sickness is not independent of the inner person afflicted and thus, ‘Doom spraying’ and other subsequent practices, stated in chapter 3, are disruptive to the normative practice of healing (Larchet 2002:09). Mastveru & Gillham (in Mouton 2015:34) quote Mette Lebech, who defines human dignity as a status of human beings that grants them respect<sup>145</sup>. Bosman (2010:569) argues for “the *imago dei* which explains our relations one unto another as well as the rest of creation; also, as having a God-ordained dignity and equally worth of respect.” All “human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, they are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”. It is interesting to note that the CRL Rights Commission in South Africa has advocated for a peer review mechanism which entails what society considers as dignified or dangerous with regards to healing and deliverance practices<sup>146</sup>. The maintenance of dignity with regards to healing is, therefore, a key criterion that is emerging in their critique of dangerous healing practices.

Furthermore, the competitive nature in human beings has led many so-called prophets to attempt healing practices that pose a threat to African society. The urge to practice so called ‘feats’ of healing has led many Neo-Pentecostal leaders to indulge in unfamiliar practices that are possibly harmful to society. Seemingly, prophets and followers who celebrate such practices regard violence or dangerous practices as glorious when used to pull down evil or when used to heal someone (Wink 1992:19)<sup>147</sup>. Many so-called prophets defend their activities by stating that ‘God’ has instructed them to engage dangerous objects when praying for the sick, thus, the experiential element comes into play, resulting in the prophets applying exegetically inaccurate methods of interpreting scripture<sup>148</sup>. When we dissolve selfish motives and self-aggrandizement through the

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<sup>145</sup> There are four key frameworks within human dignity; cosmocentric framework (value found in their moral dominion); Christocentric framework (all created in God’s image); logocentric (dignity lies in reason); and the poliscentric framework (whereby human dignity is the foundation of society and society defines what human dignity is).

<sup>146</sup> This study acknowledges that when this research was conducted, the CRL Commission has been having an ongoing deliberation with regards to finding proper regulatory standards to govern churches; thus, there are continuous discussions or rather reviews with regards to the proposed regulatory draft.

<sup>147</sup> This is whereby a dangerous act is celebrated or accepted because, at some point, it brought redemption

<sup>148</sup> The use of scripture in these settings, has been in support of the practices not *vice versa*



miraculous testimonies of others, we recognize that we cannot share in God's glory and we begin to treat those in need of healing with respect.

#### **5.4 Analyzing the intersection of power, poverty and prosperity teaching**

At the intersection, there is a direct correlation between healing and power as seen in Chapter 4. The perpetuation of dangerous healing practices has thrived upon certain factors that are linked to poverty. In an effort to explore this intersection, the chapter analyses the appropriation of power from an impoverished environment. Perhaps, what precipitates these issues is economic deprivation - making the dangerous phenomenon prevalent in poorer communities. The other factor is lack of conscientization, as gullible followers end up taken advantage of. For example, Burkey (1993:51) notes that poor congregants, "if not oppressed by the more powerful, are oppressed by their own limited knowledge and poverty".

The way we understand "the nature of poverty and what causes poverty is very important, because it tends to determine how we respond to poverty" (Myers 2011:14). In early days of development, poverty was explained as simply the absence of things (Myers 2011:14). In the 1980s, poverty was defined by Robert Chambers as a system of entanglement, a cluster of disadvantages (Myers 2011:14)<sup>149</sup>. In the 1990s, John Friedmann defined poverty as lack of access to social power (Myers 2011:14)<sup>150</sup> while Geoffrey Nelson finds that "poverty is the result of oppression that diminishes personal and relational well-being" (2011:14). From a Christian perspective, Jayakumar Christian, building on Chambers and Friedman, describes poverty as "a system of disempowerment that creates oppressive relationships and whose fundamental causes are spiritual" (Myers 2011:15). A holistic perspective from Ravi Jayakaran considers poverty as lack of freedom to grow (2011:15)<sup>151</sup>. Thus, the causes of poverty summarized are interlinking and complex and include: the physical causes (the material or the environment), the social causes (web of dysfunctional relationships), mental causes (knowledge or technical information), and spiritual causes (sin and the Fall) (Myers 134-135).

From an African perspective, Burkey (1993:03) draws a definition of absolute poverty from a group of developmental workers from Uganda, who define poverty as "the inability of an

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<sup>149</sup> A lack of material possessions, weak immune system, spiritual poverty, vulnerability, powerlessness and (115)

<sup>150</sup> He describes social power as social networks, information, surplus time and influence (118)

<sup>151</sup> Mental, social, physical and spiritual growth (131)



individual, community or nation to satisfactory meet its own basic needs.” Furthermore, the Ugandan team defined relative poverty as the condition in which basic needs are met, but where there is an inability to meet perceived needs and desires in addition to basic needs (Burkey, 1993:04). Studies have shown that people living in impoverished communities are usually the most vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Owing to the socio-economic situation of many Southern Africans, a large degree of those who are seeking healing may not necessarily be able to afford a medical cover. This, in turn, leads to an escalation of dependency on so-called ‘Prophets’ for healing - resulting in increased vulnerability or susceptibility to dangerous healing practices. For example, the Mount Zion General Assembly church led by prophet Lethebo is situated in Limpopo’s high-density areas where socio-economic challenges are prevalent.

The other aspect of possible financial exploitation is with regards to prosperity preaching – as expounded in the sections below. The prosperity gospels finds its foot in Africa in view of the fact that most Neo-Pentecostals in African churches believe that poverty is a curse and can be overcome through faith (Anderson 2009:644). This view makes it possible to analyze reasons why dangerous healing practices are accepted and perpetuated and congregants tend to believe that their problems can be dealt with by any symbol used when conducting healings. Myers (2011:15) argues that often the relationship of the poor with the God is slanted by an inadequate information on who God is and what He wishes for them. It is clear that in the case of dangerous healing practices is a distortion of God’s will that is preyed upon.

#### **5.4.1 Analyzing Power at the intersection**

Jayakumar Christian’s view on poverty corresponds with the use of power; thus, it has become necessary for this analysis to intersect healing and power in relation to poverty. In the section that follows, the notion of power and pneumatology will be discussed.

##### **5.4.1.1. Power Dynamics**

According to Bosch-Heij & Van den (2012:253), everything in the healing discourse is focused on and nurtured by the concept of power and how it is understood. Thus, the gendered conceptions of power displayed by prophets on their followers become a locus of analyses for this study. Pasewark views power as ambiguous, that is, power is present in all dimensions of life (Bosch-Heij & Van den 2012:267). According to this definition, there is need to identify power relations within NPCs especially between the prophet and follower. Other definitions, such as that put forward by Mackey

(1994:07), who defines power as a “phenomenon which brings about the state of affairs and which can be located on a continuum between the extremes of force and authority.” Seemingly, there is an unpleasant use of power within the NPCs, especially in the appropriation of the sowing and reaping ‘prosperity’ teachings. Thus, power can also be thought of “as the extent of a person’s access to sought-after resources, such as money, leisure time, rewarding jobs, and as the extent to which they have the capacity to have some effect on their world” (Burr 1995:62)<sup>152</sup>. Because NPC prophets in Africa usually possess ‘giftings’ of prophecy and healings, some use such abilities for their financial, advantage, demanding loyalty from those perplexed by their miracles. For example, Simon the sorcerer in the book of Acts chapter 8, had bewitched the whole city claiming to be ‘the’ power of God. It was not until Phillip preached the ‘Word of God’ that Simon also was converted, although he went on desiring to buy ‘powers’ from the disciples<sup>153</sup>. Thus, “the power to act in a particular way, to claim resources, to control or be controlled depends upon the ‘knowledges’ currently prevailing in a society (Burr 1995:64).” One of the key discussions in the power discourse is the relationship between knowledge and power; for Foucault (1976), “knowledge is a power over others, the power to define others” (Burr 1995:64). It can be argued, therefore, that some people are not powerful, it is the power society has bestowed upon them that makes them to appear powerful.

In the absence of adequate scriptural knowledge within Neo-Pentecostal African Churches, congregants often become delusional and susceptible to anything done under the disguise of “thus sayeth the Lord” statement. Here, Wink (1992:88) rightly observes that “Powers are never more powerful than when they can act from concealment.” This kind of delusion does not accommodate any critique of or opinions on what the ‘Man of God’ is or does -: it silences, defends, denies and omits the errors of the prophet<sup>154</sup>. The typical most tragic and yet far-fetched American example is the Guyana tragedy (commonly known as the Jonestown Massacre), where an influential evangelist had such manipulative power and authority over his followers that it resulted in the mass death of many followers<sup>155</sup>.

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<sup>152</sup> For example, belonging to an influential organization so as to have shared power over others

<sup>153</sup> Acts Chapter 8 narrates the story of Simon the sorcerer

<sup>154</sup> Premised upon a thinking that blessings will follow when followers give total allegiance to the ‘Man of God’

<sup>155</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zI9ub9AgF0&t=22s>

This study acknowledges that there are many unscrupulous things happening within the Neo-Pentecostal African churches, which are not yet published or spoken of publicly. Foucault in his power theories elaborates on a kind of power that silences people (Burr, 1995:62), especially issues to do with molestation, sexual assaults or abuse are often backed up by a culture of silence, which protects the image of the ‘Man of God’. Thus, “to define the world or a person in a way that allows you to do things you want is to exercise power” (Burr 1995:64).

For Thatcher (2011:26), “power can be interpreted as causal, whereby its exercise brings about effects, which those affected may not choose and when this happens, power becomes a “power-over;<sup>156</sup>” secondly, “power-with” requires power to be shared amongst those who have it; such as a consensus, cooperation, consultation or co-agency.” Thatcher (2011:26) finds that “if you empower someone, you enable them to do something freely, yet if you exercise power-over them, you may require them to do something whether they want to or not.” Rape cases, sexual assaults and molestation are just but a few examples where a powerful figure does harm to others who may not have courage to defend themselves at the time, owing to other factors beyond their control. Due to the nature of sickness in disempowering a person, the power theme plays a crucial role with regard to role to the understanding of health within faith communities.

#### **5.4.1.2 Power dynamics in scripture**

Wink (1992:65) further points out that powers are not simply evil and that the good news is that “God not only liberates us from the powers but liberates the powers as well – thus, they can be redeemed.” Migliore (2008) “when analyzing the power of the trinity, understands God’s power as ‘shared power.’ Here, the full understanding of God’s power will have a profound impact on Christian life and can reshape the way power is exerted in human life, both by individuals and communities” (Bosch-Heij & Van den 2012:267). The biblical tradition of power sees divine power fore-fronting the paradox of strength being generated in weakness and, indeed, throughout scripture there is a dialectic that God’s power is revealed in the presence of weakness and vulnerability. (Bosch-Heij & Van den 2012:270). In fact, it could even be argued that the powerlessness of Christ in the hands of humanity leading to his death, should help the church to understand the powerlessness of the poor (Bosch-Heij & Van den (2012:266). Also, Philippians

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<sup>156</sup> In gender relations, when power is taken such a form, it reinforces the vulnerability of women and their need for protection.

chapter 2 describes the attitude of humility through the example of Christ who humbled Himself, although He was endowed with so much power, he did not consider His position but took the form of a servant. Thus, the challenge of power becomes humility, seeing the other as equal or better than the self.

There has arisen a new self-important attitude modelled by many Neo-Pentecostal prophets who use spiritual giftings as a premise for attaining respect, fortunes and fame. Mastveru & Gillham in (Mouton 2015: 36) state that “if the unity of the scriptural witness is not respected, interpreters will be tempted to choose between passages of scripture, and the basis for that choice would become the new authoritative norm.” This problematizes selective text reading and interpretation of OT scriptures. Sadly, selective text reading is a common trend in how power is appropriated within NPCs and, which allows for a distortion of healing narratives as already stated in Chapter 3.7.4.

Biblically, Wink (1992:03) considers powers to be both visible and invisible, earthly and heavenly, spiritual and institutional. It is clear, nevertheless, that the actions conducted via dangerous healing practices and prosperity preaching of some NPCs are indeed also evidence of visible, earthly and institutional forms of abusive “power-over”. In the NT, the authority of the church to heal is primarily supported by the understanding that Jesus promised disciples that they will do what he did, or even greater works shall accompany a believer’s faith. When the focus of power shifts from humans, and is accredited to the God of the Bible, then the promise of divine healing will grant hope to many diseased people who may not afford proper health care.

#### **5.4.1.3 Power as Pneumatological from Classical Pentecostal view**

Amongst the three waves of Pentecostalism, Classical Pentecostalism is considered the first modern outpouring of the Spirit (Cox 2001:281). Generally, the belief in the continuation of the spiritual gifts and the baptism of the Holy Spirit is considered the common denominator amongst the three strands of Pentecostalism. In Christendom, “the role of Pneumatology has presented a new and vigorous Christianity which offers help to life’s problems and not just spiritual ones (Anderson 1992:117).” Vast spiritual experiences in Pentecostalism and its growth in various locations has brought about questions relating to finding the right means of appropriating the power of the Spirit. Thus, one of major themes of Pentecostalism is the concept of empowerment

or the endowment with power from above (Lederle 56:201)<sup>157</sup>. Here, the Holy Spirit is considered the agent of healing and deliverance, active and at work when prayers of healing are conducted for the sick (Anderson 2009:646).

According to Gifford (2011), the power structures in Pentecostal churches differ amongst Classical Pentecostal denominations and Neo-Pentecostal African churches, which has resulted in enormous tensions. The Classical view of power is rooted in the OT and NT theology that ascribes all power as belonging to God, who is sovereign to act, will and to do according to His own will (Bosch-Heij & Van den (2012:265)<sup>158</sup>. According to Bosch-Heij & Van den (2012:253), “the definition of power in the Christian healing discourse indicates that power is derived from power, which means that living beings receive their power to exist from another source, that is, God<sup>159</sup>.” This reformed understanding of power correlates with the Classical Pentecostal view of power, which can be referred to as the enablement of the Holy Spirit. This means that the church’s power, without the intervention of the Holy Spirit, is meaningless (Bosch-Heij & Van den (2012:264). As discussed in chapter 4.3, in Classical Pentecostal theology, “divine power is understood as the power of the Spirit that enables the believer to exist in a way that corresponds with God’s intentions” (Anderson 1991:120). The focus of Classical Pentecostal power is, furthermore, “rooted in the perception of reality as an open reality where divine power intervenes on behalf of believers” (Bosch-Heij & Van den 2012:268-269). Thus, the general Pentecostal view of power can also be seen as experiential, intervening and soteriological (Bosch-Heij & Van den 2012:269:253). “Power is understood here to belong to the frame of relationships: it is an unending series of maneuvers that constitute one’s existence and well-being. Power also equals health.” Pentecostal theology of power hinges on the person of the Holy spirit and is, thus, perceived as the divine power key for “abundant life in a precarious socio-economic and political environment” (Kalu 2002:129). Powerlessness is, therefore, “not simply a problem of attitude nor an empirical fact deduced from an outcome of realistic analyses, but rather, a sense of powerlessness is always a spiritual disease deliberately induced by the powers that keep us complicit (Wink 1992:103).”

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<sup>157</sup> Generally, empowerment by the spirit is a dominant motif in all of Pentecostalism, but the Keswick-Holiness grouping within Classical Pentecostalism holds a two -stage pattern of Christian living (59).

<sup>158</sup> Similar to the reformed understanding of power

<sup>159</sup> Through the presence of the Holy Spirit, God’s power can be experienced.

Unlike many AICs and NPCs whose ministries are formed around certain charismatic individuals, who have a strong authoritarian undercurrent backing their ministries, the Classical Pentecostals have developed formal or hierarchical structures where the Holy Spirit is the chief force backing their scriptural jurisdiction of authority, at least it is a common belief that decisions are inspired of God, although human ideas may be communicated under the disguise of God's name.

In disseminating healing, those who are on the receiving end, ought to be taught to act in faith, not necessarily to venerate vessels that carry healing. It can be argued that healing comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit, and that explains the possibilities of miracles, healing, and power (Kalu 2008:09). According to Asamoah-Gyadu (151:2015), it is the Spirit who enables healing and the casting out of evil spirits in the context of Pentecostal evangelistic endeavors. Hence, miracles and divine happenings are not a result of manmade schemes to attaining fame and popularity, "it is the act of God to baffle the carnal minds of the World into the knowledge that the kingdom of God draws nigh".

Asamoah-Gyadu (2015:179), states that the Pneumatology of the church must have a Christological focus and must be understood as the spirit of Jesus Christ. Acts chapter 1:8, "you shall receive power when the Holy ghost has come upon you," is one of the bedrock scriptures that anchors the empowerment of the Pentecostal church. From the bible, power is used interchangeably to refer to both the endowment of the Spirit's power, and sometimes to the authority. "This soteriological and Christological emphasis is added to the Pneumatological and missiological dimension: that Jesus Christ is the baptizer in the Holy Spirit who empowers ordinary people to witness to the ends of the earth" (Anderson 2009:644). "The full gospel implies a reciprocal relationship between the bible and the spirit; not only does the bible explain the experience of the spirit but also and perhaps more importantly, the experience of the spirit, which enables people to better understand the bible" (Anderson 2009:644).

#### **5.4.1.4 Power as understood in the NPCs in Africa**

The authority of scripture can, in all traditions, be easily abused to establish the authority of a specific person (Horn 1989:135). The theme of power within Neo-Pentecostal African Churches is precarious because of the proclivities towards dangerous healing practices and the

commercialization of spiritual gifts especially prophecy<sup>160</sup>. This research acknowledges that the implication of “God’s power does not eliminate the relative independence and power of the human being” (Bosch-Heij & Van den 2012:266). Thus, prophets can exercise power in the name of religion or culture. Gendered conceptions of power within Neo-Pentecostals express the “Man of God” as the power figure. Unfortunately, within many NPCs in Africa, the dominating and superior behavior is the most widespread error (Chambers 2003:213). Here, Wright (2002:149) characterizes Neo-Pentecostalism into a threefold strand: power/pride, popularity/success and wealth/sex/greed<sup>161</sup>.

Furthermore, within Neo-Pentecostal African Churches, some shepherds misuse their leadership authority based upon the ignorance of those who identify them as mediators to God (Lederle 128:2010). Another problem lies in Christian denominations or general assemblies who do not have doctrinal control over “free churches” in which “each church is sovereign and retains full authority, despite belonging to a convention of like-minded congregations” (Lederle 115:2010). The argument of this analysis emanates from the understanding that “reciprocity between the healer and the sick person almost disappeared as the physician became increasingly powerful and the sick person defined as feeble and incapable” (Cox 2001:108). That is, prophets who are endowed with power are generally viewed as invincible, whilst followers are usually seen as “sheep” in need of being led. Thus, use of power as authority within Neo-Pentecostal African Churches, has left many congregants misled, abused, manipulated and has left them poorer than before. As major contributing factor here is the authoritarian claims within Neo-Pentecostal African churches by prophetic leaders, which is often reinforced by the way people view these leaders. Also, this has also led the mechanization and commercialization of the miraculous.

Furthermore, the relationships of the poor usually constitute those who oppress and disempower as a result of the non-poor “playing god” in their lives (Myers 2011:15). Christian notes that the non-poor (the prophets in this context), express their god-like complexes by seeking to absolutize themselves in the lives of the poor, claiming immutability for their power over the poor (never sharing power), and interacting with other non-poor, thus, safeguarding and enhancing each other’s power (Myers 1999:73). “This god-complexes of the non-poor becomes internalized as the poor

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<sup>160</sup> Seeding for prophetic direction or utterance

<sup>161</sup> Calling the Church back to Humility, integrity, Simplicity’, in Julia E.M. Cameron (ed.) *Christ our Reconciler: Gospel, Church, World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 149-58



acquiesce to what appears to be the normalcy and immutability of their captivity” (Myers 1999:74). Myers (2011:15) quotes Jayakumar Christian who noted that the rich wants to act like god to the poor hence, they create a system that the poor develop a god-complex of the non-poor. “The poor are poor largely because they live in networks of relationships that do not work for their well-being” (Myers 2011:15). “When the church views the poor as a group that is helpless, it gives itself permission to play god in the lives of the poor” (Myers 1999:57). With regards to dangerous healing practices, the healer assumed power over the diseased, and in most cases, women fell victims to sexual assaults.

#### **5.4.2 Analyzing Prosperity at the Intersection**

“Although there are African communities who share in the understanding that prosperity and wealth are not material alone but reflect inner peace, satisfaction, contentment and the maintenance of social networks, many Africans view prosperity and success as signs of God’s blessing” (Kalu 2008:261). It is not, therefore, surprising that the message of the prosperity ‘gospel’ is uncritically accepted within Neo-Pentecostal settings<sup>162</sup>. This analysis is undergirded by the realization that the “health and wealth gospel seems to reproduce some of the worst forms of capitalism in Christian guise” (Anderson 2001:182).

##### **5.4.2.1. Prosperity from a Classical Pentecostal view**

The Classical formation of Pentecostalism attracted many poorer people because the message was targeted at empowering the poor. In general, salvation is understood as a source of social betterment, enabling a believer’s upward mobility in terms of social class (Martin 2002:144). Although Classical Pentecostals have a tithing system which benefits the church administrative work<sup>163</sup>; - they have also adopted helpful disciplines to bolster the integrity and economy of the family, by for example, encouraging self-help groups, promoting independent initiatives and equality within the social space provided by the church (Martin 2002:144). In Zimbabwe, one of the largest denominations is headed by Ezekiel Guti, and has developed a “doctrine of talents, which includes explicit encouragement for business women, teaching them self-reliance should they face desertion” (Martin 2002:147). Classical Pentecostal theology, therefore, “often

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<sup>162</sup> Whilst this analyses discredits those who are amassing wealth from the poor; it acknowledges that there are also those who, through hard work, acquired certain material luxuries in life through hard work (Asamoah-Gyadu 2015).

<sup>163</sup> faithful payments of tithes and offerings have enabled Classical Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostal Churches to raise enormous amounts of money for running their churches and projects (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015).



encourages poverty alleviation – although their strategies in indigenous communities are far more nuanced” (Kalu 2008:263). Asamoah-Gyadu (2015:69) emphasizes the fact that while Neo-Pentecostal prophets claim to have the power to enhance their follower’s prosperity, Classical Pentecostals believe that obedience to the principles of giving are found in the Bible and are significant to leading a life of prosperity<sup>164</sup>. Classical Pentecostals believe in the God who forgives sin, but who is also concerned about poor and the oppressed. (Anderson 1992:32). The issue contested is not only with regard to the acquisition of material things in Neo-Pentecostal Churches, but with the theological interpretations that are given to their acquisition (Asamoah-Gyadu, 167:2015)<sup>165</sup>.

Within the biblical framework in chapter 4, prosperity in the scriptures is never conceived entirely in material terms, rather, those who do not have material things should not feel left out of God’s grace. Giving is a biblical mandate and it must be done as part of a total response to God in worship because it is a response to what God has done for humanity in Christ (Asamoah-Gyadu 2015:173). Here, prosperity is defined as having sufficiency for one’s needs and ability to bless the poor (Lederle 152:2010) in that “the God who forgives sin is also concerned about poverty, sickness, barrenness, oppression by evil spirits and liberation from all forms of human affliction and bondage” (Anderson 2009:643). Myers (2011:09) finds that “when we separate the spiritual from the physical, not only do we separate evangelism from development, but we separate gospel as word from ‘the’ gospel as deed.” Instead, “salvation is an all-embracing term, usually meaning a sense of well-being evidenced in freedom from sickness, poverty and misfortune as well as in deliverance from sin and evil” (Anderson 2009:644). “The bible is believed to contain answers for needs like sickness, poverty, hunger, oppression, unemployment, loneliness, evil spirits and sorcery” (Anderson 2009:644). When prophets do not take into consideration the psychological and economical aspects of the sick person, healing will only address the physical aspect of humanity. Salvation speaks a language of wholeness, which includes the material, but does not emphasize it at the expense of other aspects of wholeness – social, economic, psychological, spiritual etc.

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<sup>164</sup> Because of such Neo-Pentecostal belief within followers, the Man of God is highly esteemed and revered even in abusive terms.

<sup>165</sup> However, emphasis of prosperity and wealth differs from preacher to preacher.

#### 5.4.2.2 Neo-Pentecostal Prosperity gospel

As noted in Chapter 4 section 4.3.2, the impact of the Word of Faith Movement on Pentecostalism has contributed to the way in which prosperity is understood within Neo-Pentecostal African churches. One of the critiques leveled against some NPCs is that they spread a ‘prosperity gospel’ similar to the Word of Faith movement (Anderson 2001:182). Asamoah-Gyadu (2015:4) argues that North American prosperity-style televangelism has had an impact on the ecclesiology of Neo-Pentecostals in Africa. Here, Asamoah-Gyadu (2015:166) warns against the promotion of materialistic and extravagant lifestyles, especially in cases where material blessings are regarded as prime indicators of faithful Christianity. He finds that prosperity thinking tends to rely too much on proof-texts and by doing so, there is tendency to interpret the scriptures in a selective manner, without due attention to context, which leaves the messages preached to be one sided (Asamoah-Gyadu 2015:174)<sup>166</sup>. Some so called ‘prophets’ make extreme and absolute atonement rights claim onto health and success without a holistic consideration of ‘success principles’ on earth. This promotion of ‘success principles’ stands over and against the methodology suggested by Matsveru & Gillham (in Mouton 2015:33-34) which recommends the Bible as a “big story” rather than using selective “proof texts” risking the danger of skewing the biblical message to suit misconceptions or agendas of greedy.

There is an excessive display of flashy life styling and profiteering by “prophetic leaders” who are leading Neo-Pentecostal African churches. It can be argued that the cardinal preaching of the gospel of giving, which is often framed in terms of the ‘success principle’ of the “law of sowing and reaping”, often entails “sowing” (giving large amounts of money) to the Man of God in order to secure blessing as opposed to the idea of giving money into the church coffers (Asamoah-Gyadu 2015:170). Christian argues that it is not simply human beings who are perpetuating poverty, but systems within which they live that create and sustain poverty (Myers 1999:75). Thus, innovative ways of milking funds from the congregants range from: a consultation or ‘encounter with the prophet’ fee as a prerequisite before meeting one-on-one with the prophet, proximity charges where if one sits closer to the prophet a higher fee is required and even the auctioning of the prophets clothes to be sold at exorbitant prices, and other money making schemes, which enrich the prophet more than the organization represented<sup>167</sup>. There is subtle belief in the minds of

<sup>166</sup> It privileges the rich and marginalizes the poor, weak and the underprivileged.

<sup>167</sup> Also, the selling of anointing oil, towels, wrist bands and prayer mantles

followers who consider salvation through identification – in this belief, one’s personal wellbeing is tied with the fortunes of a hero leader (Wink 1992:29)<sup>168</sup>. As already stated in chapter 3.5, the introduction of dangerous healing practices reflects many other issues. The Seven Angels ministry in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, is one example mentioned in Chapter 3 with regards to financial implications posed within NPCs in Africa.

Furthermore, Asamoah-Gyadu (166:2015) argues that Neo-Pentecostal theology ‘shoots itself in the foot’ by marginalizing the poor and the vulnerable through finding itself short of answers amid poverty, pain and misfortune. Asamoah-Gyadu (167:2015) states that the model of spirituality that is presented by prosperity preachers fits the lifestyles of those who are already rich or “on their way up”<sup>169</sup>. “Poverty is reduced to merely a material condition having to do with the absence of things like money, water, food, housing and the lack of social systems” (Myers 2011:05). He argues that some Neo-Pentecostals have taken things far beyond what is scriptural by teaching and preaching sermons in support of their extravagant and materialistic lifestyles – at times in subtle competition with their church’s affluent members (Asamoah-Gyadu 2015:165).

## 5.6 Gender at the intersection

Healers are predominantly male, thus, a gendered conception produces a particular perception of ‘men’ in healing. Even though divine healing is of God, power to heal may also be used to oppress, especially women and children who constitute large attendance within such gatherings and respond in numbers to ‘alter calls’ for healing. It is important to note that we have learned to categorize people as superior or inferior, and to attach value to people according to those categories. Function is, therefore, often confused with value and women in patriarchal societies are often viewed as inferior and more vulnerable to exploitation (Matsveru & Gillham 2015:3). It is, therefore, not surprising that women are often the victims of dangerous healing practices. This section, therefore, considers a gendered analysis of authority within Neo-Pentecostal African churches usually manifested through patriarchal and toxic masculine beliefs.

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<sup>168</sup> Third party claims such as, “if my prophet prospers, then I will prosper, if he is poor, then he is not worth following.” Salvation comes not by insight or truth but through identification (Wink 1992:29).

<sup>169</sup> Asamoah-Gyadu (175:2015), the church cannot leave the poor without any testimony

### 5.6.1. Defining Gender

Generally, “gender refers to the relations between women and men” (Bradley 2007:01). Another proposition underpinning the gender discussion defines gender as a social construct - it is a way of dividing the world perceived and making sense of it. Theron in Mouton et al., (2015:54) defines gender as a “socially-perceived set of characteristics that distinguishes males and females and determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a man/woman, within a specific context and culture.” Bradley (2007:04) makes a proposition that “gender is politically deployed as the usage of the term has been persistently bound up with power relations between women and men<sup>170</sup>.” Similarly, Theron in Mouton et al., (2015:54) argues that “gender roles are learned through socialization process and institutionalized through education, political and economic systems, legislation, culture and traditions.” Thus, in gender studies, gender roles are regarded as socially constructed, which means that a person’s location has certain influences of the persona. When this happens, “gender becomes something that is not fixed, but something that varies according to time, place and culture” (Bradley 2007:03). Within the Pentecostal movement, some leaders perpetuate cultural oppression under the umbrella of religion – especially regarding gender, race and class (Anderson 2009:647). Neo-Pentecostal leaders in African churches have displayed a power proclivity assimilating patriarchal and masculine tendencies in relation to their feminine counterparts. Thus, analyzing patriarchal influence on male “prophets” with regards to gender enquiry becomes necessary.

### 5.6.1 Patriarchy

The Christian experience and practices are extraordinarily diverse and always reflect particular historical and cultural situations (Porterfield 2005:19). As Kalu (2008:148) observes, the introduction of Pentecostalism in Africa is clearly built on patriarchal gender ideologies (Kalu 2008:148). Patriarchy has been a major player in influencing power relations between men and women. Castells (1997:134) defines patriarchy as men’s authority over women and children. Furthermore, this authority has been accepted over the years and institutionally enforced. Generally, many African societies evolve in a specific patriarchal context. Theron in Mouton et al., (2015:63) notes that in traditional patriarchal Africa, the family line should be perpetuated through children, especially males. Thus, “dominance and superiority complex are biologically

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<sup>170</sup> The rebirth of feminism brought back interest in gender arose from the rebirth of feminism, which was considered as a political move targeted at helping women achieve equality altogether with men (Bradley 2007:04).

and socially pre-set, especially when derived from ethnic group and gender - people are born into races, castes, tribes and nationalities, which socially defines relative status and power; and in most societies, men are defined as uppers and women as lowers, reinforced by socially embedded gender roles” (Chambers 2003:79). This disposition places men at an advantage, relegating women and children to play supportive roles but deprived of the opportunity to lead. Thus, Matsveru & Gillham in Mouton (2015:39) argue that one’s gender or gender role should not determine one’s value<sup>171</sup>. Instead, people should assume leadership roles based on their capabilities and should not use the office of power to oppress others in relation to them. In relation to this study, the healer ought to treat the sickly person with respect, the rich prophet must relate with poor people in humility while the male prophets should treat women with dignity.

Patriarchal influence within NPCs in Africa generally takes the form of “power-over”. According to Thatcher (2011:26), in gender relations, “power-over” often takes the form of patriarchy<sup>172</sup>. Historically, “this kind of power has been used against women to deny them legal rights, and to coerce them into submission, as in cases of domestic violence and rape” (Thatcher 2011:26). “Gender relations are relations of power, and in almost all societies, men have had more power,” and in some societies, men have had more of it. Louw (2009:99) identifies four sections where men exercise this authority, namely: economic (leaders in the marketplace), biological (physical make-up), cultural (procreation and domestic roles), and biological affluence and religion where the religious privileges favored men.

Healers have been privileged with gifts of healing and the working of miracles, not to dominate, but to edify the congregants. Unfortunately, this has not been the case with some leaders within the NPCs. It should also be said that Neo-Pentecostal African churches have evolved from a continent still recovering from patriarchal dominance. Thus, patriarchal symptoms are reflected in the leadership disposition of such churches, where a single ‘male’ (the pastor or prophet) is considered as supreme and approached with fear mixed with reverence. This problematizes the whole leadership spectrum within NPCs in Africa. In chapter 3, the aforementioned examples of those practicing dangerous healing practices reflects only males who make the majority, but the possibility of women engaging in such practices is inevitable. Although women in history have

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<sup>171</sup> The God-ordained dignity, derived from the concept of image of God, does not give us room to view one’s gender as more valuable than the other.

<sup>172</sup> From a causal perspective of power

always been healers, gender practices arise from ancient traditions and are resistant to the ordination of women (Kalu 2008:163).

In the Classical formation of Pentecostalism, “women continued to lead, and despite being barred from the pulpit, they preached in the streets, and when refused ordination, they became missionaries and went to places where men were afraid to go” (Cox 2001:138). There they became healers and teachers. Scholars have posited that without women, Pentecostalism would have died a longtime ago. Currently, there is a strong conviction abroad in the movement today that the era of male dominance is fading (Cox 2001:138). Since the beginning of the movement, “both men and women have tried to undercut the Spirit’s gender impartiality,” especially where some Pentecostal believers drifted into theological alliances insisting on the 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians dictum, which speaks about women expected to be silent in church (Cox 2001:125).

### 5.6.2 Masculinity

Both Classical Pentecostals and APCs should be problematized with regards to gender – despite the equal participation of women in Classical Pentecostalism and the ordination of female clergy in several Classical denominations<sup>173</sup>. Certainly, within NPCs in Africa, leadership is closely linked to power, dominance and masculinity. The pioneers of dangerous healing practices are mostly males. Wink (1992:95) uses the term ‘delusional assumptions’ to make the observation that “men are believed to be better equipped by nature to be dominant than women, and that some races are naturally suited to dominate others.” From this understanding, “men are usually seen as first-class citizens, leaders, decision makers, heads of family, providers and protectors whilst women are seen as not completely equal to men, second-class citizens, weaklings, inferior, submissive to men (Theron in Mouton et al.2015:58-59).” This poisonous thinking leads to toxic masculinities.

According to Parent *et al.* (2008:02), toxic masculinity is a subset of hegemonic masculinity. Kupers (2005:715) understands toxic masculinity as seeing the “need to aggressively compete with others and to dominate others.” Furthermore, Parent *et al.* (2008:02) regards toxic masculinity as characterized by a drive to dominate endorsement of misogynistic views. Several implications associated with the use of power in relation to women results in some prophets seeing women as objects of abuse<sup>174</sup>. A controversial case of pastor Tim Omotoso has buzzed social media

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<sup>173</sup> The Assemblies of God and the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa both ordain female clergy

<sup>174</sup> Women avail themselves innocently to do God’s work; although some may accommodate have other motives

platforms, whereby alleged victims recount their sexual abuse experiences. This study takes place at a time when the South African government judiciary system is dealing with this case awaiting a verdict<sup>175</sup>.

Neo-Pentecostal prophetic figures have fallen into a controversial category due to the unsavory introduction of dangerous healing practices that perpetuate various socio-economic challenges to gullible congregants. The hunger for fame, wealth and power has intoxicated the relations with those who are disadvantaged in the community. Analyzing the disposition of prophets amongst the poor tends to reveal a hegemonic kind of persona. Whilst there are different masculinities, the myth of hegemony masculinities is flawed in that it “speaks for God; it does not listen for God to speak,” because it sees God’s sovereignty as its own authority and it misappropriates the scriptures (Wink 1992:30). Although there are followers who are superstitious, such as those who recruit others to their gathering through selling false images of their ‘prophet’, spreading malicious lies in the attempt to baffle the minds of those in disadvantaged situations is wrong. It is probable, that false testimonies have enticed many, who were longing for a divine encounter or prosperity. Also, other followers have entered into a complex situation where they receive conditional aid, such that if cases of sexual assault are brought forward, the same followers may deny such allegations because they may not be willing to tarnish or expose the image of the prophet who, on one hand, is helping many people while abusing them on the other. The good the prophet does seem to justify the evil things he does. Myers (1999:59) acknowledges that all of us have a desire to feel superior or dominant over others and this can be partly linked to personality and partly to culture. Sadly, in some societies in Africa, male supremacy is uncritically assumed to be normative (Wink 1992:39)<sup>176</sup>.

Theron in Mouton et al., (2015:71) calls on the church to help people, especially women and children by enabling them to attain their dreams, reaching their full potential and to walk freely understanding their inherent dignity as people created in the image of God. Matsveru & Gillham in Mouton (2015:48) further promote the theological understanding that both women and men were made in the image of God and should lead to a respectful behaviour towards and caring action for one another. Here, Theron in Mouton et al., (2015:71) finds that the Church has a crucial role,

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<sup>175</sup> [Online] Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4swZJAFT1E4> [2018, 21 November].

<sup>176</sup> Theron in Mouton (2015:53), in many African contexts, women do not have the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities as men.

voice and responsibility to transform cultural norms and practices that cause gender inequality. The people, who were sprayed with ‘Doom’ insecticide by prophet Rabalago, those who ate snakes and drank petrol, were innocent people in need of healing. Unfortunately, places of worship that have been traditionally considered as safe spaces, have been turned into a den of thieves, trading gifts for profit at the expense of the lives of the powerless (John 2:15)<sup>177</sup>.

## 5.7 Conclusion

People in Pentecostal churches tend to prefer churches where they received their salvation or churches where their spiritual needs are met (Anderson & Otwang 1993:16). This chapter has analyzed intersecting issues with regards to gender, power dynamics and healing phenomenon within Neo-Pentecostal Churches. The model of interacting issues has facilitated a broader reflection on what has been discussed in the previous chapters. The Classical Pentecostal understanding of healing and power has been lance in which dangerous healing practices are critically examined. Upon findings, the dangerous healing practices are theologically deficit, physically harmful, spiritually challenging, socially condemned for usage on humans, psychologically disturbing. In view of this, the next chapter seeks to make recommendations in response to factors centered around the healing phenomenon being perpetuated in society by Neo-Pentecostal African leaders on their followers.

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<sup>177</sup> Narrates an account whereby Jesus made a whip and drove out those who had used the church premises for trade



## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter has explored the intersection of health, power and gender in the socio-economic discourse, making an analysis of the key issues that perpetuate dangerous healing practices. This chapter provides a summary of the research findings and recommendations for action with regards to the ‘prophet of Doom’ and the dangerous healing practices within Neo-Pentecostal African Churches in an attempt to answer the research question “*What factors lead to the acceptance and perpetuation of dangerous healing practices by certain Neo-Pentecostal religious leaders on their followers?*”

As the healing phenomenon within such religious settings intersect with various socio-economic issues, recommendations are extracted from the healing, gender and power intersection. The chapter commences by providing a succinct overview of all the chapters constituting this study and key findings followed by recommendations with regards to guarding against such tendencies. As such, the Pentecostal church ought to guard against dangerous healing tendencies that are emerging within such a movement. This chapter concludes with suggestions for future research in the light of the healing phenomenon trending within Neo-Pentecostalism in Africa.

#### 6.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter which provides the research question, problem statement and motivation. The research question, as stated above, is “What factors lead to the acceptance and perpetuation of dangerous healing practices by certain Neo-Pentecostal religious leaders on their followers?” The chapter provides the objectives formulate for the study that guided the research in answering the research question. The practical theological design – which engages the practical theological methodology as theorized by Osmer also indicates that documents, social media platforms and academic articles will be analyzed in addition to the literature review. Since Pentecostalism is a global movement, the scope of this study investigates the Neo-Pentecostal African churches in the SADC region, with a special focus on South African dangerous healing practices. This chapter concludes by outlining the summary of chapters covering this research.

Chapter 2 provides the conceptual understanding of healing within Neo-Pentecostal Churches. It was noted that healing is a global phenomenon that is not only limited to the Christian enterprise, thus, the understanding of healing differs from one setting to the other. The chapter identifies the spiritual approach to healing, which has been widely accepted in various religious settings. Pentecostalism, as a branch of Christianity, has engaged in healing practices from its Classical form to its Neo-form, thus, the chapter explored the Neo-Pentecostal understanding of healing. The relationship between healing and power is also examined. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the fact that Neo-Pentecostal African churches have introduced dangerous healing practices to the Pentecostal heritage.

Chapter 3 acknowledges the fact that many Africans embrace the concept of spirituality expressed through religion, belief or tradition. Thus, Neo-Pentecostalism within African settings has been, to some extent, influenced by the way Africans understand spirituality - especially in relation to symbolic healing. In the attempt to answer the question, “what is going on?” the chapter has explored the prophet of ‘Doom’ and various other examples of Neo-Pentecostal leaders, who are indulging in dangerous healing practices. Based on an exploration of some of these practices’ findings, possible implications associated with such dangerous practices have been identified. The chapter concludes by identifying possible factors leading to the perpetuation and acceptance of dangerous healing practices by religious leaders on their followers.

Chapter 4 has taken a corrective stance with regard to healing practices within Pentecostalism by engaging the Classical Pentecostal understanding of healing. This chapter has addressed the question, “what should be going on?” using Osmer’s model of conducting a research. As a normative chapter, a theological reflection on healing and power from the Old Testament to the New Testament practices are explored. Furthermore, the Classical traditional practices of conducting healing - such as the laying of hands through prayer - and the use of scripture in guiding the healing practices have also been analyzed. The chapter concludes by acknowledging the use of scripture declarations and prayers for healing as normative for healing, encompassing a holistic framework of healing that does not bring harm to the congregants.

Chapter 5 explores the intersection of healing, power and gender in the socio-economic discourse. In view of the fact that healers are mostly african men administering ‘dangerous’ healing practices to women and children who constitute the larger share of the Neo-Pentecostal African church

gatherings; the study also explored the role of gender. Furthermore, at the intersection, various socio-economic issues have been identified, thus, poverty has been used as a context to interpret and explore why these practices are prevalent. Here, the relationships between the rich so called ‘prophets’ and the poor congregants have been analyzed, examining the power dynamics at play within such settings. Furthermore, with regards to gender discourse, the role of patriarchy in influencing the toxic masculinity of male prophets was examined. Exploring the intersection of healing, health and gender has further exposed factors that lead to the acceptance and perpetuation of dangerous healing practices in Neo-Pentecostal churches in Africa.

### 6.3 KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study explored the prophet of ‘Doom’ as a departure point for analyzing the phenomenon of healing and power dynamics within Neo-Pentecostal African churches. An investigation was conducted to identify the factors that lead to the acceptance and perpetuation of dangerous healing practices by certain Neo-Pentecostal religious leaders on their followers. In the attempt to answer the research question, these are the findings:

**Socio-economic factors challenges resulting from poverty.** Although there are isolated reports of dangerous healing practices within city centers, the environment where these practices are thriving and spreading rapidly is within impoverished communities. Africa as a continent is still recovering from slavery, underdevelopment and poverty. Impoverished environments have been a breeding ground for diseases and ignorance, thus, dangerous healing practices have attained preference within such settings. Poverty as a major contributor, has several elements attached such as **lack of education (religious or general), vulnerability and life crises**. This has left many powerless and vulnerable - resulting in abuse, manipulation or being taken advantage of.

**Cultural factors in relation to patriarchy and masculinity.** Many African societies have emerged from strong patriarchal roots embedded within culture in the disguise of honor, respect and tradition. Thus, women and children have suffered severe oppression from male dominance in society. Sadly, some Neo-Pentecostal African church leaders have adopted similar patterns of **toxic masculinity** in the name of religion or honor to the ‘man of God.’ The resultant effect is a **culture of silence** amongst those who have been abused, molested or manipulated because they **fear** ‘curses’ that would follow by speaking against the so called ‘prophet.’ Healers are predominantly male, whilst those in need of healing are mostly women and children. Toxic

masculinity has no place for dignity, gender equality or power sharing, thus, it becomes problematic.

**The fact that few NPC leaders are theologically trained.** This study has noted that Pentecostalism is the most experiential branch of the Christian faith, thus, many preachers scorn bible school or academic training and instead base their credentials for ministry solely on their divine calling. This has resulted in a lack of sound teachings – even in cases where scriptures are mentioned, they are usually supportive of an experience and used as ‘proof texts’. The inference use of the text has led to a **lack of efficacious use of the Bible**. Unlike Classical Pentecostals who regard the Bible as normative for their practice, many Neo-Pentecostal African leaders have identified certain prophets who they regard as ‘spiritual fathers’, who provide oversight over their ministries. In cases where the “spiritual father” lacks theology, the “sons” also lack in sound teachings. Also, if the “spiritual father” engages in dangerous healing practices, “sons” replicate the same practices. Furthermore, **a lack of theological training** has influenced **errors in the use of symbolic healing** and misinterpretation of symbolic examples found within scripture.

**Lack of denominational belonging/affiliation.** This results from the notion of ‘spiritual fatherhood and sonship.’ The provision of ministerial covering of a prophets by another prophet seems to replace denominational belonging. Unlike Classical Pentecostals who have been structured into denominations, Neo-Pentecostal African churches are **indigenous and autonomous**. Thus, there is no peer review mechanism - as proposed by the CRL Rights Commission - to regulate harmful practices from penetrating churches. Independence and freedom of expression has influenced many upcoming religious leaders to disregard apostolic councils or ministers’ fraternities through which pastors are accountable, one unto another. A lack of accountability and adequate training has presented an opportunity for anyone who claims to be sent of God.

**Quick schemes of attaining wealth and healing.** Many poor people are vulnerable to anything that presents itself as a quick way of attaining success. Thus, many people who cannot afford proper health care have resorted to spiritual means of attaining healing. Owing to desperation and lack of adequate knowledge in relation to scriptural understanding of healing, any kind of healing presented becomes an acceptable form of healing. Also, some Neo-Pentecostal prophets in Africa desire to lead a **flashy lifestyle**, with the result that they prey on the poor who are vulnerable and

their immediate audience. As a result, there has been **commercialization of the** healing enterprise through the selling of anointing oil, prayer mantles and consultation fee charged to those who desire one-on-one encounter with the prophet.

**These findings have exposed possible factors** leading to the acceptance and perpetuation of dangerous healing practices by Neo-Pentecostal African leaders upon their followers. These findings shows that there is a **pressing need for the church to guard against such dangerous practices.**

## 6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study makes recommendations based on the findings of the research. Africa has been bombarded by various diseases, famines and other socio-economic challenges. The role of the church in the community must address issues that affect livelihoods rather than perpetuating them. Thus, this study seeks to make an academic contribution with regards to what should be going on within Pentecostalism.

- Upon realization that dangerous healing practices thrive on impoverished environments, **the church should not only rely on government with regards to tackling socio-economic challenges** that have affected society. The church has a crucial role in facilitating developmental schemes targeted at educating, equipping and empowering communities. Due to life crises, vulnerable people in society seek protection, aid and support from the church, thus, the immediate place of worship has a role in bringing hope in people's lives.
- Also, based upon findings that there are cultural factors relating to gender situated at the intersection, **the church has a role to play in advocating for dignity, gender equality and equal availability of opportunities.** Patriarchal influences on the use of power has led many into a culture of silence, where they are forced to remain in silence because of fear, thus, the church ought to interpret power in such a way that it does not promote toxic masculinities under the guise of 'anointed prophets.' There is need for the church to defend the powerless and resist controlling powers. As such, the church has a role to defend, challenge and dissolve excessive use of power that advantages only the powerful, and works at the expense of the lives of the weak and vulnerable.

- Upon the realization that Neo-Pentecostal African churches celebrate the notion of ‘spiritual fatherhood and sonship,’ **the church has an obligation to partner or affiliate with Classical denominations such as those that would provide ministerial oversight and theological training.** Since the challenge of Neo-Pentecostal African churches has been ‘experiential theology’, there is need for ministers to undergo basic theological education and ministerial training. The art and science of interpreting biblical text is of paramount importance when it comes to doctrinal accuracy. Spiritual father figures who are not qualified to provide mentorship have led many young ministers astray, thus, there is need for seasoned ministers from various denominations to take up the role of mentoring upcoming prophets.
- Upon realization that there is a lack of denominational belonging amongst some Neo-Pentecostal African Churches, **there is need for indigenous churches, such as those that are run independently from other denomination, to formalize structures and establish local consortiums that can uphold the local church constitution with integrity.** Lone prophets have threatened to tarnish the Pentecostal healing tradition through the introduction of dangerous healing practices. Thus, proper leadership structures that regulate the leaders’ conduct have to be clearly stated, setting boundaries of what is acceptable or dangerous. Here, a code of conduct should be put in place, guided through Christian biblical principles protects the minister and those ministered to.
- Findings highlight quick schemes of attaining wealth and the commodification of healing. In this regard, **the church has to conscientise the community against the commercialization of spiritual gifts.** People who cannot afford proper health care or solutions to their problems regard prophets as solution givers, thus, the church has to offer spiritual assistance free of charge, granting room for the poor. Although the church as an organization has tithing and offering systems to help it run its programs, other extra biblical schemes of enriching individuals must be avoided. Unemployment has also seen many people resort to starting ministries, so the church has to stand guard against unscrupulous individuals who masquerade bearing title of prophets, but whose chief aim is to feed their own stomachs.

## 6.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has attempted to investigate the ‘prophets of Doom’ and the phenomenon of healing and power dynamics in Neo-Pentecostal African churches in order to identify the factors that lead to the perpetuation and acceptance of dangerous healing practices by certain Neo-Pentecostal religious leaders on their followers.

- Future studies should, therefore, interrogate the impact of the ‘spiritual father’ notion that has become a millennial trend. This study has noticed that this notion is actually a dominant belief amongst Neo-Pentecostals African churches. Thus, investigating such a concept, would allow for a lengthy analysis of the gaps relating to this concept.
- This study has engaged different literature and social media platforms in responding to the research question. There is need for an empirical study on dangerous healing practices within Neo-Pentecostal African churches from the perspective of lived experiences especially of those affected by such practices.
- Since women and children make up the majority of those affected, this study falls into the gender inquiry. There is need for women to take up the role of academically documenting their experiences with the ‘prophets of Doom’.

## 6.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a summary of the previous chapters and also stated the findings, recommendations and made suggestions for future research. Possible factors have been identified at the intersection with regards to healing, power and gender, leading to the acceptance and perpetuation of dangerous healing practices by Neo-Pentecostal African church leaders on their followers. Findings have identified poverty as the major component through which these issues become prevalent, thus, socio-economic factors have contributed to the gullibility of those in despondency. In making recommendations, this chapter calls on the church to arise and defend the church from heresies that have infiltrated its walls. The church as a whole, has an obligation to guard against dangerous practices and safeguarding its integrity at all times.

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